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NEWSZINE

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RPGA®

NETWORK

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The Third Degree

Turn On The Hot Lights

from the Gaming Casebook of Inspector Jeff Cisneros

This is the city: not Raven's Bluff, but your town. A man enters a game shop filled with gaming accoutrements. He sees title after confusing title, flashy boxes that look like fast numbers. He plunks down his hard-earned bucks, slinks off into the night...and soon, a scream is heard. It's murder. Another ripoff.

That's why I'm here. I carry a badge. The same one you got with your RPGA® Network membership. As a long-time Judge and veteran of many GEN CON® Game Fairs, I've seen my share of the fast and loose game systems, the sexy numbers that turn into cheap drivel when you open the package. I'm here to grill game systems, so you won't be burned.

Hahlmabrea

In a market flooded with Fantasy RPGs, the first question that comes to mind is, "will this be the same unoriginal stuff?" Many small, beginning companies produce products that are simply *their versions* of established games. In the case of Hahlmabrea, I was pleasantly surprised.

My surprises began with the cover by Ed Graves, which catches the eye without being tacky or screaming. Inside is a 160-page manual that comprehensively describes the game world. A rarity among role-playing manuals is a readable typeface; you can read the Hahlmabrea manual without squinting.

Hahlmabrea is a world where adventurers are truly extraordinary and appreciated, and thus must be licensed. Legal consequences for illegal adventuring acts are severe. Being a thief does not mean you can take something simply because it is not nailed down properly. Necromancy is frowned upon, except in the case of raising a murder victim to find his or her killer.

There is no implied racial prejudice, and parties who journey across country to kill orcs for the sake of killing will get a rude surprise when they are thrown in jail. The world of Hahlmabrea is one that emphasizes the importance of community and its survival, not simply the enrichment of the guy with the biggest sword. With so many game systems—and people in the real world—advocating greed and cynicism, this is a refreshing approach.

Let's Take It From The Top

The rules start with an explanation for the beginner of what role-playing is. A comprehensible explanation of the game mechanics follows. The reader learns about the game world through simulated banter between two fictional characters; this brightens material which would otherwise sound dry.

Unlike other game worlds where the historical basis is loose at best, designer Daniel A. Fox explains Hahlmabrea in terms of specific real-world societies, such as the Mesopotamians, Greeks, and Egyptians. This gives the gamer and the judge a solid basis from which to operate.

The third part of the introduction describes the character races (the *Folk* of Hahlmabrea). This section runs 15 pages, but gives a good basis for character generation.

The Characters

The Hahlmabrea character generation system is more complex than many fantasy role playing games. But don't be frightened. This complexity allows you to create a complete character, not just dry numbers and passionless statistics. With some effort even average gamers can create just about any type of character they want.

The first step is choosing a character concept to use as the emphasis for your adventurer. The author stresses this as the most important part of character creation, since there are no arbitrary limitations placed on character races or adventuring types. This is a pleasant surprise after so many systems where "you can't do that, only Thugs of Fourth Level and above can do that."

Next, primary traits are generated, and from them secondary rolls such as Reality Checks and Magic Rolls are made. Third, Abilities and Professions are chosen. Each of these are explained in the context of the game world. This process is time-consuming and will take beginners a little effort and about an hour of work.

The time taken in character generation is saved during play. The author states that this system frees players from the hassle of complex calculations during the game, and I agree. All rolls are actually calculated in the character generation phase.

The combat system is quite simple, and the spells are defined by the user and referee. A minimum of dice rolls are used in actual combat. I've found the system fairly easy to play, and fairly balanced in combat and magic.

The Rest Of The Story

The rest of the rule book is an array of chapters which describe equipment, armor, and spells that make the universe more complete for adventuring. For the GM, there are tips for running the game and a good starting selection of beasties. There are very few charts needed for the referee; anyone with a reasonably facile mind can GM this game.

I'm satisfied with Hahlmabrea. It has a very lively feel and brings to mind the times in which Gilgamesh might have adventured. My sole complaint is that the character generation system could be simplified.

Hahlmabrea
Fantasy Role-Playing Game
Publisher: Sutton Hoo Games
Price: about $20.00
Designer: Daniel A. Fox
Product information: Sutton Hoo Games, PO Box 1507, Buford, GA 30518-1507

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NEWSZINE

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About the Cover

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Notes From HQ

Something New, And The Phone Myth

Many gamers join the Network so they can get in touch with other gamers. In the past, there have been two ways to do this: Placing a Classified Ad in POLYHEDRON® Newszine or a sending a SASE (Self Addressed Stamped Envelope) to your regional director asking for addresses of nearby members. Overall, Classified Ads were the best bet. Classifieds are more reliable, since the HQ staff handles them itself and they don't require a SASE. Further, other members contact *you* when you place a Classified, and you can tell your fellow members exactly what you are looking for.

Classified Ads still are available to all members free of charge. However, HQ is now offering a membership search service. U.S. Regional directors will no longer provide addresses.

At present, HQ can only perform membership searches on U.S. addresses. To request a membership search, send HQ your name, membership number, one five-digit U.S. zip code to be searched, and a check or money order for $3.00. You cannot request a search over the phone, and you can request only two searches a year. HQ will try to locate at least eight gamers for you. If we cannot find eight members at the zip code you send us, we'll search nearby zip codes. If you like, you can send us up to five secondary zip codes to search to get your eight names. Sound complicated? Don't worry, issue #82 will include a form with step-by-step instructions.

Phone Myths

As the RPGA® Network grows and prospers, more and more people are taking advantage of the services the Network provides. This is great. However, HQ cannot meet this demand unless the membership gives up a common misconception about how we work:

Phone calls don't help us get our work done. HQ answers its phones from noon to five pm, Monday through Friday, except on national holidays and between Christmas Day and New Years Day, when the HQ is closed. HQ also is closed Friday afternoons between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Please, we need phone-free mornings to edit the Newszine, administer the tournament program, and finish the 1001 other daily tasks we have. This does not mean we spend our afternoons sitting around waiting for the phone to ring; we're still busy in the afternoons, but we try to be available. Try to reserve phone calls for emergencies. Emergencies include: *Changes of address.* It's very important that HQ has current addresses for all its members and registered clubs. Please try to call us *before* you move. *Tournament or convention material that doesn't arrive at least a month before the convention date.* There is nothing so awe inspiring as a convention organizer in a panic, and as convention organizers ourselves we generally are very understanding. However, if your materials haven't arrived and you wait until the Monday before your convention you are taking a great risk. We can't always drop everything and express your materials out to you. Push the panic button sooner.

Things you might think are emergencies, but aren't: *Points.* HQ does not handle point inquiries over the phone. That's simple, isn't it? If you are at least a Master (3rd level) judge or player, you will receive an update every year in late July. If you aren't at least a Master, or you don't want to wait until July, send HQ your name, your membership number, and two dollars. If you belong to a Network club you probably can get your president to write the letter, provided you pay the two dollars. In about a month, you'll get a printout showing what tournaments we have on record for you. *Errors in your tournament history.* If you think you've found an error in your printout, you can't get it resolved over the phone. Write a letter instead. Describe the suspected error as best you can. If you think an event is missing tell us the scenario title; the convention's name, city, and date, your judge's name, and the name of the other players at your table. We'll need this information to track down your records. **Hint:** if you're concerned about your point total it would be a good idea if you kept track of all this information as you play in each event. Before you write in, look through your back Newszines and see if the convention name has appeared in the "This Just In" box on the convention page. If it hasn't it's a good bet that results from that convention haven't been processed yet. Note that phone calls about unprocessed tournament results just keep us from processing results. Try calling the convention organizers instead, and let them call us.

Good Gaming

Skip

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Mess With Their Minds!

A Game Master's Grab Bag of Unspeakable Surprises

by Roger E. Moore

One of the best things about being a GM is being able to design an adventure so bizarre and horrible that it reduces your players to gibbering insanity. I certainly enjoy it, anyway. Lots of people have heard my favorite story about misleading my group's AD&D® game characters into crossing universes, whereupon they were transformed into intelligent rabbits in Pennsylvania (using FGU's *Bunnies & Burrows* rules). They had to enter a haunted house to fight rats that worshiped a Cthulhoid deity (using Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* rules). Instead, we'll talk about *other* ways to cause your normally happy players to emit crazed shrieks and pleas for mercy. They'll love it. Trust me.

The key to this sort of "shock therapy" game mastering lies not in how bizarre the setting is, how strange the monsters look, or how marvelous the treasures are. None of that matters. You want to play directly with the player characters' own identities and perceptions of the world. You want to alter the nature of the game reality itself so that for a while the characters can't count on anything—not even themselves.

If you're going to set up a game scenario that throws all of the players for a loop, you'll want to loop them fairly early in the game so they have lots of time to scream. There are several themes involved in designing a mind-bending adventure, and you can choose the ones that best fit your own natural brand of GM rudeness.

Amnesiac Characters

Game designer William Connors told me a story about a role playing event for GDW's *Traveller* game that Marc W. Miller (the game's creator) is said to have run at a convention. At the start of the adventure, eight characters are in a conference with their patron, who is explaining that the mission he is hiring them for is so confidential and dangerous that they must have the memories of what they did wiped out. The characters apparently agree to these terms, because suddenly the room shifts slightly. The patron is there again, all smiles and passing out huge bundles of reward money. "Great!" he says. "That was excellent work! You were fantastic!" He waves good-bye and takes his leave.

But now there are only six characters.

What happened? Finding out is the nature of the adventure. The characters should be properly motivated to find out what exactly they did, where the other two characters went, where they got all their injuries, whether they're wanted by the police, etc. I have no idea how the original adventure turned out, but knowing Marc Miller, it was probably pretty wild.

The memory loss should come early in the game, perhaps even right at the start of the adventure. Amnesiac characters can come in several varieties. Memory loss might be partial, as noted with Marc Miller's adventure, or extensive, as happens with the lone player character in the AD&D adventure, "Tomb It May Concern," by Randy Maxwell, from DUNGEON® Adventures issue #22. In the latter case, the hero wakes up in a dungeon at the adventure's start. He knows his name and that he's a fighter, but little else. It's up to him to sort out the rest of his life and fend off the attacks of the local dungeon inhabitants, all the while trying to discover what he's doing in a dungeon in the first place. (I won't spoil the answers here.)

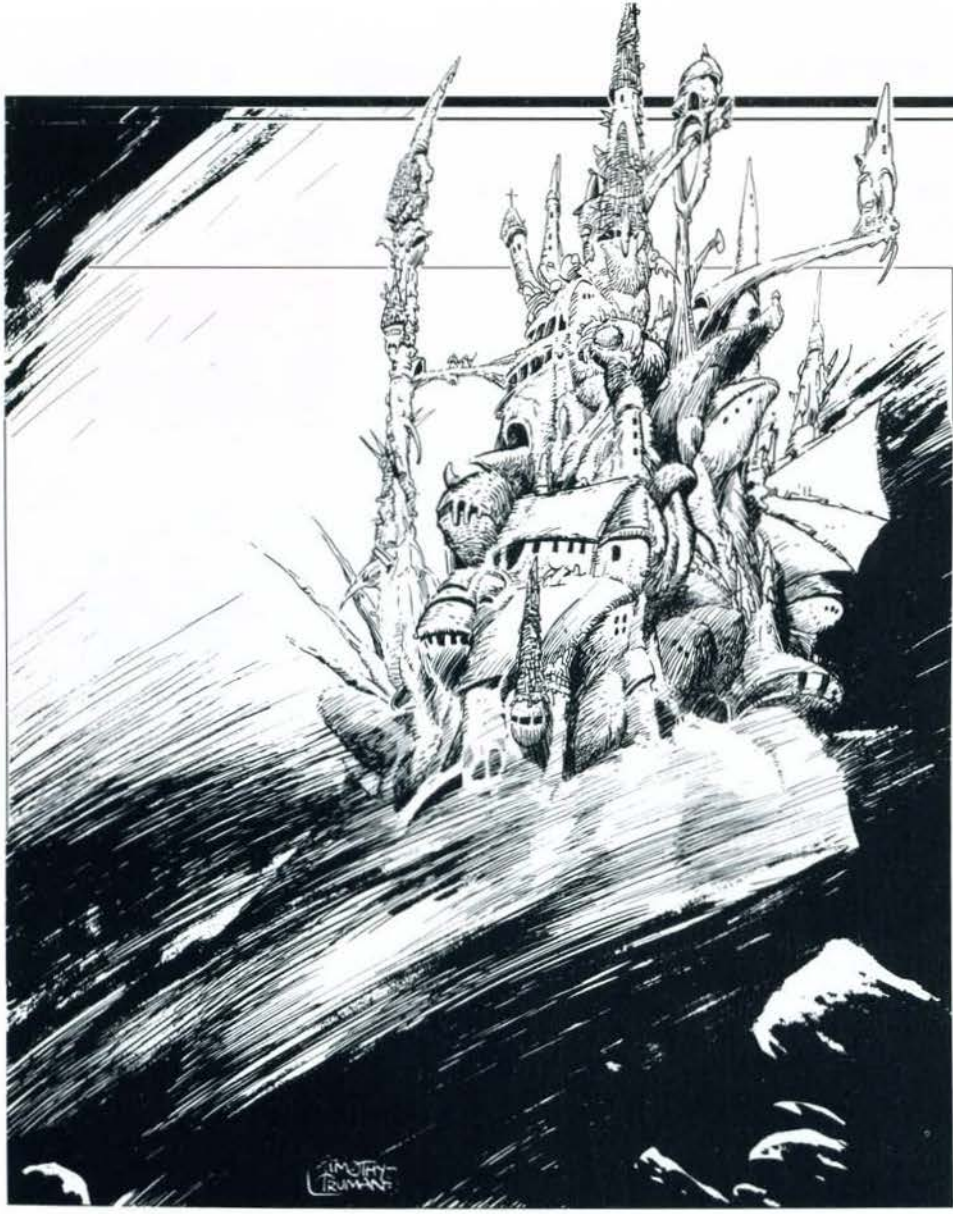
In fantasy games, memory loss can be produced by spells (e.g., the *forget* spell for the AD&D game), by magical devices or potions (e.g., a potion of *forgetfulness*, from the same game), or by monsters, such as the obliviax (a.k.a. memory moss, from volume two of the *Monstrous Compendium*). In science fiction, science fantasy, super hero, and espionage games, the same effects can be produced by drugs, super powers, or "weird science" devices. A blow to the head could do it in any system. One or more characters might become the victims of thieves, assassins, saboteurs, terrorists, or vengeful foes, having their memories deliberately stolen and being reduced to the level of homeless vagrants with complete amnesia. How will they come back from complete defeat?

A variation on this theme is a combination of memory loss and a secondary personality overlay. What if one or more characters in an adventure previously had their memories removed or repressed, then had entirely new personalities and memories given to them? If you've seen the marvelous SF movie *Total Recall*, you'll remember that one of the "reality options" the hero had was that he was actually a secret agent who had gone undercover by having a personality replacement done to him electronically, so he could infiltrate an evil organization. A later option was that he was an agent for an evil organization who had gone undercover in this manner to infiltrate a rebellious civilian group. Once a new personality has taken hold, of course, it might not want to give up its body!

Yet another variation is that one or more characters are not actually human at all, instead being alien, golemlike, or robotic constructs that think they are human and have sets of apparently real memories. The fighter Alias, from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® novel *Azure Bonds* (by Jeff Grubb and Kate Novak), is in exactly this predicament, as were characters in several old *Twilight Zone* episodes who found that they were either robots or had been magically created by someone's description of them placed in a tape recorder. (It's like rolling up a character in a role playing game, then meeting that person in real life.) Bruce Heard's D&D® article series for DRAGON® Magazine, "The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*," detailed a race of spiderlike beings who could adopt human shapes and personalities, in extreme cases forgetting who they really were (see DRAGON issue #183).

This kind of shock should come later in an adventure, though discrepancies between what the character remembers and actual events in the world should show up fairly early. The GM should detail the character's actual powers; the character might have armor plating under the skin and be capable of some unusual feats, thanks to magical or technological enhancements.

A final variation could appear in either science fiction or fantasy games: multiple identity. Here, two or more player or nonplayer characters share the same identity, but they aren't aware of it at first. Rampant cloning is an



obvious cause of such confusion, and this could occur thanks to magical rituals or medical science. In the AD&D game, a *mirror of opposition* could malfunction, producing normal twins of the original characters. This could also happen if one character's identity was picked up by a creature like the AD&D game's doppleganger, which then suffered a head injury or similar problem and decided that it was the real character. It would have to be played as a player character, of course—perhaps unknowingly by the original character's player himself—if the original character is temporarily removed from play! Finally, one or more previously unknown identical siblings to one character might appear, having the same names and very similar histories. All such characters might wonder why everyone remembers them doing things they never did (everyone else, of course, saw the other siblings). The only problem here is that unless all the characters are duplicates of the same person, only a few members of the group will be affected. Maybe an evil spell could turn all the heroic characters into the same person, which brings us easily to. . . .

Transformations

Richard Lipman, a gamer from Rochester, N.Y., came up with an interesting AD&D adventure called "Seeds of Destruction," which was used several years ago by the RPGA® Network as a tournament module. At the start, the characters are zero-level halflings who have certain minor powers. As they complete their little adventure, they discover that they are actually not halflings at all, but *polymorphed* and personality-changed high-level adventurers who ran afoul of a certain evil and sorcerous creature (their revenge on their nemesis makes up part two of the tournament).

This might be an interesting surprise to spring on high-level characters at the end of one of their great adventures, one in which their foe escapes, promising revenge. The next adventure starts out with each character getting an all-new character sheet, giving only brief details of that character's background and abilities. The players have to role play these new characters until they figure out that they aren't who they really are—which could be highly amusing if they were changed into goblins, kobolds, small children, or the like. The quest then is to recover their old forms and their equipment, then to find the dastard who screwed up their lives.

The *polymorph* surprise was, of course, used in that heroes-turned-rabbits adventure mentioned earlier; it was made all the worse (better) because I also converted the characters as cleanly as possible into another game system, preserving various personal abilities such as relative levels of Strength, Intelligence, Dexterity, etc. Having universe-crossing characters be converted into other forms that fit a new game system is an intriguing idea, if you can pull it off (this idea belongs more in the reality-altering section that follows).

In the transformation sector, characters might also have the problem of waking up dead. What if some fantasy heroes bedded down for the night, only to be slain by some powerful magic or monster, getting up a day or two later as undead creatures such as the AD&D game's revenants? Their new forms should let the characters at least seek revenge on their killer, though it would also be nice if they could find a way to come back to life as well (the players might want revenge on *you* otherwise). A similar plot was used in the RPGA Network tournament "Dance of the Dead" by Bruce Nesmith and James Lowder.

And, in the AD&D system, what about an entire adventuring party that has been *reincarnated* as animals or other humanoids by a helpful druid who found their bodies?

With the characters' sanity already under siege, the best thing a GM can do now is to mount the final assault. This, of course, involves . . . .

Reality Shifts

If you don't want to mess directly with the characters' memories and physical shapes, you can simply throw their entire universe into the toilet. When you can get them to start questioning the nature of reality, then you've really got something.

Take the movie *Total Recall* again (if

you're a GM, you really ought to get this on video and watch it). Is the protagonist caught up in a psychotic computer-induced nightmare, a normal computer-induced adventure, a bad dream, or hard reality? The constant shocks the hero takes against the nature of his identity and his world are astounding; it's a wonder he can even make it through without going mad. Can you do the same thing to characters in your role playing game?

In high-tech settings, especially cyberpunk ones like FASA's *Shadowrun* game or R. Talsorian's *Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0.* system, computerized realities into which characters' minds are plugged could easily duplicate the situation in *Total Recall* (you might also want to see the film *Dreamscape* on this same theme). The "netrunning" adventures taken on by the characters could be played out using other game systems, since the computerized "reality" need not relate to the main game world (TSR's BOOT HILL® game for a pseudo-Western environment, for instance), which would only further confuse the issue of what is real. If you're a really sadistic GM, then maybe the computer in which characters are netrunning malfunctions, accidentally giving the characters temporary amnesia, so they all wake up thinking they are zero-level halflings. . . .

Fantasy-game characters, lacking computers, still have powerful spells and psionic powers that can alter perceptions of reality. Here, we are specifically talking about illusions of all sorts. Imagine the potential in having a dungeon so heavily coated with illusions and phantasms that characters can't be sure if they are being attacked by real monsters or not, or if their maps have any semblance of truth. In the fantasy novel by John Bellairs, *The Face in the Frost,* two wizard-heroes are beset by horrifying phantoms that tear at their sanity, leaving them open to deadlier and more real attacks; similar illusion-use in the style of TSR's Gothic-horror RAVENLOFT® campaign could have the heroes gasping for air.

Speaking of illusions and reality, science fiction game fans should note the considerable powers of the holodeck of the U.S.S. *Enterprise,* in the TV series *Star Trek: The Next Generation.* The Dream Park novels by Larry Niven and Steven Barnes are worth a look, too. Super hero game fans should consult DUNGEON® Adventures issue #25, for Allen Varney's MARVEL SUPER HEROES adventure, "Hellfire Hostages," for an illusory threat with some bite; this idea has been often used in the comic books.

Dreams, too, are used in fantasy games to alter reality for one or more characters at a time. Dream environments appear in the AD&D DRAGONLANCE® module DL10 *Dragons of Dreams,* by Tracy Hickman, and in William Connors's RAVENLOFT adventure, "Bane of the Shadowborn," from DUNGEON Adventures issue #31, among many other places. Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* game makes extensive use of dream reality in its products dealing with the aptly named Dreamlands. The problem with using dreams (which can also be an advantage) is that no real game rules usually apply to dream states; anything at all can happen—and usually does. The GM will need to establish some guidelines on running these trips into the mind, but having such freedom can enliven the game quite a bit, if properly run.

Reality can become confused without using computers, dreams, or illusions. If the heroes know they are entering a testing situation run by a major organization (e.g., they are secret agents about to undergo their "final exam"), they might not know for some time if the events going on were preplanned or if the test is being interrupted by a real emergency (a real terrorist attack coming during a fake terrorist attack, etc.). You can make it worse, of course, by having other players secretly role play false identities (pretending to be other heroes but actually being traitors or assassins who are sabotaging the test). Maybe the saboteurs are being misled themselves, thinking they are helping the other character when in fact they are not. Testing situations can be made up for any game; wizards of Ansalon in the DRAGONLANCE saga, for example, must undergo the Test of High Sorcery before going on to the 4th level, or else the mage is declared a renegade and is hunted down. (Again, the Dream Park novels come to mind here.)

In role playing games, reality might also shift if powerful but invisible forces affect the world. If an evil undead godling manipulates negative magical forces around one fantasy world, it might make undead beings hardier, cause magic to malfunction, and have other unforeseen effects distorting game mechanics in a broad fashion (something like this happens in the book *The Face in the Frost*). Weird science effects, such as in the movie *My Science Project,* or wholesale revisions of reality by supernatural forces (as in West End Games' *TORG* campaign, Palladium's *Rifts* world, and FASA's *Shadowrun* game) might make themselves known. Returning the world to normalcy might be a lost cause, and just keeping up with the changes could occupy a lifetime.

Alternate worlds in super hero and time travel games should be considered, too. What if you went time traveling or plane-crossing and accidentally returned to the wrong reality, one that looked a lot like your own but was subtly—and perhaps fatally—different? ("Why does all this money have 'Union of Socialist States of America' printed on it?") In "The Voyage of the *Princess Ark*" series, the flying ship and its crew are catapulted into their own future and cannot return to the past (see DRAGON issues #163-164). Imagine a similar fate for someone sent forward into a post-holocaust era in a modern-era campaign (cryogenic storage might be a good vehicle for this transfer; it is used in Time Line's *Morrow Project* game). This theme has appeared many times in science fiction literature and movies (the movie *Genesis II* comes to mind). The characters trapped in such a world might still have a chance to return to their own time or universe, but they'll have to work at it!

These are just a few basic ways in which you can blow the doors off your role playing campaign and send players screaming for the windows—or so we hope. After all, role playing gamers have been almost everywhere in their imaginations; coming up with new surprises for them is always pleasant.

The Everwinking Eye

As Cold As Bare Fingers

by Ed Greenwood

"Look north, lad, and learn swiftly just how small and fleeting a creature ye are, whate'er Art ye command! What are ye—or me, or any archmage—beside those peaks, that howling wind, that cold, endless emptiness. Then, when ye feel small and humble enough, come back down by the fire and have some tea. Both the drink and the looking are good for ye."

Elminster of Shadowdale,
said to his pupil, Shardryn the Sorcerer (later ruler of Derlusk)
Year of The Black Axe

Our ongoing tour of the Realms has brought us to the chill wilderlands north of the Moonsea—and to the isolated frontier town of Glister, known to most of the rest of the Realms only as a brutish place of fabled cold, as in the expression: "as cold as bare fingers in Glister."

Glister is a fortified, windswept place of stone. It is the only human habitation (except for a few small, hidden caves) for many days ride in any direction. In addition to housing the retired adventurer and archmage Thusk Tharmuil, Glister is also notable as the home of three temples: a small fortified temple to Tymora; a large walled abbey dedicated to Tempus; and a towered complex in the center of town sacred to Auril. Arguably, these protect the town as much as Thusk.

The Hall of Luck is run by High Priestess Ssaluntra Halamar, a former adventurer (CG hf P11; a specialty priestess, as detailed in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Adventures* hardcover sourcebook). Under her are 11 priests and 16 brothers.

The Hall of Luck is a small, popular temple, well-to-do, yet not too prosperous. It stands near the west wall of Glister, on the north side of the town's main street.

The House of Swords stands east of Glister, outside the walls. It is a self-sufficient, walled complex almost as large as Glister itself. Here, 49 warrior priests serve under High Priest Ghordrimm Sumbar (CN hm P17). They tend large gardens inside the abbey walls (recently plagued by a werewolf-priest), and they patrol Glister's vicinity in armed bands.

This temple is rich and strong; its influence extends as far as Hillsfar and Zhentil Keep. Worshippers of Tempus who are favored by the gods may be loaned magical weapons from the abbey's vaults to aid them in a particular task. They are expected to later return the weapon, with an offering of another magic weapon or item as payment for the loan. The temple has been known to accept considerable gold in lieu of magic.

The House of Auril's Breath ("The Cold House" to Glisterians) is a spired, pillared house on Glister's main street. It is home to 14 priests under High Priest Malakhar Rhenta (NE hm P16). Its worshippers must register (in their own blood, it is said) in the temple rolls, which boast some 1,600 names. This temple is prosperous. And it is said to be involved in covert intrigue regarding the politics of Hillsfar, Sembia, the Vast, and the Zhentarim. The temple priests pay spies and agents (usually traveling merchants or mercenary warriors) well, using gems. It is believed the gems are mined from beneath the temple's very chancel—or perhaps mined in long tunnels that lead from the temple basement to the east and south away from Glister.

Somewhere north beyond Glister is at least one stronghold of The Cult of the Dragon, from whence came the great flight of dragons that ruined Yulash, heavily damaged Zhentil Keep and Melvaunt, and struck at many other places—including the ruins of Phlan, where priests of Bhaal had established a secret temple. Bhaal's subterranean temple collapsed, crushing or burying alive many priests. Bhaal worshippers are known to be seeking the Dragon Cult stronghold in the north, to work their revenge.

The presence of the Cult's dragons and dracoliches (of unknown numbers and might) is another reason that any successor to Zhengyi would keep Vaasa's wargauntlets east of the mountains. The mountains themselves march on northward for hundreds of miles, ending near the lonely mining outpost of Ilinvur.

North of Ilinvur, all (human, at least) trails end. There are vast steppes, broken by Pelauvir, the River of Ice. It flows from The Great Glacier west to The Tortured Land, where frozen sand rises in many weird, broken shapes. Frost giants, frosts (see *MC11*), yeti, and ice toads make their homes in this broken landscape.

Due south of it, along the edge of Anauroch, The Great Desert, rise more mountains, a ridge of peaks running east along the northern end of the Border Forest.

In these mountains are mines; ore gleaned from them is gathered at the fortified outpost of Whitehorn for smelting.

North of the frozen Pelauvir the steppes continue. Pelauvir is bridged at a ruined stone city built by giants so long ago that its name, and even which giants lived there, has been forgotten. (Only the colossal dimensions of the span speaks of the size of the builders.)

This city is known to men today as Flindyke, because a road leading northward out of it runs for a tenday's travel or more into land claimed by the flind. From "frozen Flindyke," as bards always call it, the road heads across the steppes past Turnback Mountain (so named because the prudent turn back when they see it) and around a tongue of glacier to the Frozen Forest.

Beyond the Frozen Forest (which is just that: a thickly-grown wood of conifers, all frozen solid and sheathed in glittering ice) rises the great lone mountain of Ghaethluntar. The mountain is a gigantic peak that is almost a hundred miles long, and is much tunnelled by the flind, who dwell under it by the thousands. Few humans have seen Ghaethluntar and lived. Few today want to view it.

Metal-caravans struggling through these icy lands usually consist of 40 to 60 sledges pulled by many rothe and heavily defended by rothe-mounted warriors armed with composite bows, spears, and swords. The archers keep their bowstrings wound around their bodies, under outer clothing, until needed; this prevents the strings from freezing and breaking when a bow is bent.

The metal from Ilinvur and Whitehorn is rough-smelted into bars as long as a short man's leg, with rounded edges and two flat sides. These are tied onto the sledges with many ropes (coated with animal fat to keep them strong

when frozen). On the return runs, these sledges carry heavy loads of food.

Thar's broken landscape slows caravans and invites ambushes from outlaws, rival merchants, orcs, and worse. The Ride, a comparatively flat area of steppes west of Thar, allows swift travel, but is home to nomadic barbarians who regularly prey on caravans—and nearby are the Zhentilar from The Citadel of the Raven.

To avoid such foes, metal-caravans carry their iron, silver, gold, and copper down the eastern edge of the Ride, close to Thar, and head east into Thar when the Dragonspine Mountains are in view (and Zhentilar patrols can be expected). Exactly where caravan-masters turn into the Ride to evade waiting nomads and ambushes or turn into Thar to avoid the grip of the Zhentilar is always secret, and often changes according to the hunches and observations of a careful caravan-master. A caravan that must fight ogres or bandits soon after leaving Ilinvur or Whitehorn may be a helpless target later if its guard has been weakened.

Some of the best caravan-masters active today include:

* Aerel Whitefeather of Melvaunt (homely and scarred, but quick-witted and usually laughing—and very proud of her long, long blond hair, a LN hf F7).

* Bhuldoun Delesker of Glister (a fat, bearded, blustering LN hm F10).

* Tanos Hawklight of Thentia (a slim, grim, well-educated NG hm F11).

* Ghorald Maern of Thentia (a sly, cynical, grizzled CN hm F7).

* Dundosz "Forkbeard" Thantlar of Melvaunt (a steely-eyed, always-alert forkbearded LN hm F9).

Ilinvur is small (its population rarely rises above 6,000), and Whitehorn is even smaller (about 4,600). Both towns are rugged indeed, policed by 20 heavily-armed Keepers of the Peace and governed by mages of middling power installed jointly by Melvaunt and Thentia.

Thabbatan Nightdark (LN hm W7) is Law Lord of Whitehorn, and Eriosz Windhammer (LN hm W6) is Law Lord of Ilinvur. Both hold power only weakly; they are there mainly to report to Melvaunt and Thentia (via *crystal ball*) if major orc, flind, or ogre attacks occur. They try to keep the peace, not necessarily to enforce the letter of the law. Keeping the peace involves breaking up major brawls and investigating murders.

Often a ruler of one of these outposts is murdered or bullied into flight, and some outlaw or other assumes command until the arm of Thentia or Melvaunt can next reach out far enough to set things right. Reach out they always do. They fear that Zhentil Keep might install an agent, and thereby seize almost complete control over Moonsea mining; this is something they don't want to happen. The Knights of the North (q.v., page 54 of the *Cyclopedia of the Realms* in the original Realms boxed set) have been instrumental in preventing such attempts in the past.

The barbarians of the Ride consist of many small, hostile tribes, all with differing customs and war-chiefs, all feuding with other tribes, but all dangerous to outsiders of any species. It is they who weakened the beast-men enough, long ago, that Thar could fall. It is they who prevented the Zhentilar from sweeping across the Moonsea North unopposed after seizing The Citadel of the Raven (and thereby undoubtedly preventing a major war between Vaasa and Zhentil Keep). It is they who sometimes, in ones or twos, wander south to join in the affairs of men of warmer climes, but who are still ill understood by most in Faerun.

Moonsea barbarians are thought of mainly as drunken, berserk brawlers who destroy or plunder everything within reach. The truth of this image is best summed up by the long-dead mage Mhzentul, who said, "If ye hunt a man like a beast, and torment him like a beast, in the end he will lose patience and turn upon thee like a beast. Who, then, is the greater beast?"

Much yet remains to be discovered about the barbarian tribes. They last gathered together to fight a common foe in the Year of the Dragon. In that year at Stoneshoulder Creek, which is roughly midway along the northern flank of the Dragonspine Mountains, the nomads overwhelmed and slaughtered a large Zhentilar-led army that had set out from The Citadel of the Raven to march on Glister. The mages of Zhentil Keep won clear by means of their Art, and they took a fearful toll of the barbarians. But not a horse or man-at-arms of the fighting-men of the Citadel came back from that field of blood.

The nomads set up a stone near the creek that briefly said to the world (before an angry Zentarim mage blasted it out of existence): "We wait." And wait they still do in the Ride, falling without mercy on those who come within their grasp, as a spider does in its web. They wait, and strike to slay, then wait patiently again.

Others wait, too, deep in the northern reaches of the Border Forest, and high in the mountains bordering Thar—the ogres who once ruled all the Moonsea North as far north as Pelauvir, and as far south as the Tesh and the Galenarr. The last Tharkul (ogre king of Thar) was Maulog, and his passing is still fresh in the minds of many grim and savage ogres, who hunger for the day when there will be a Tharkul again. Then humankind shall be meat-slaves or sprawled carrion from the Tesh and the Galenarr north to where the flind dwell.

One ogre chieftain, Daurogh, dwells in Thar and is always on the move to avoid being hunted down and slain. He is said to command 60 ogre warriors and to wield magic found in tombs and seized from vanquished human opponents.

Beholders, too, are said to be growing more numerous and have been seen in ruined Teshwave, in Thar, and even in the Dragonspine Mountains (in addition to those eye tyrants known to associate with the Zhentarim). Truly, these are interesting times in the North.

The North is indeed as they say in the Vilhon Reach—a land of "hard, brutal men in leather and furs who swing overhasty swords."

Oh, yes; Elminster bids me remind interested readers that Vaasa, Damara, and Impiltur are detailed in *FR9/The Bloodstone Lands*; The Great Desert in *FR13/Anauroch*; and The Great Glacier in *FR14/The Great Glacier.*

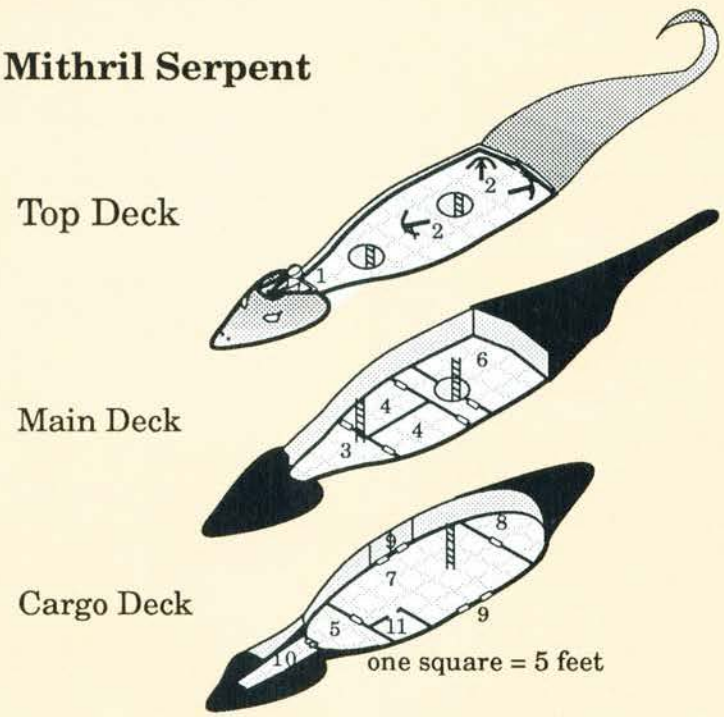
PCs learning of the North will see many opportunities for adventurous employment—as a caravan-guard, for instance, on the hazardous run north to the mines with food and gear, and south with metal. Or perhaps there will be freebooting adventure, from the merchant intrigue of Melvaunt and Thentia to seeking the lost treasures of Beldoran.

DMs wishing to lead PCs into the "H" (Bloodstone) modules can do so by means of a dangerous mountain crossing of the Galenarr (perhaps chased by ogres, orcs, trolls, and/or giants) into the Bloodstone area, or by means of the pass near Glister into Vaasa itself.

The Cult of the Dragon, the nomads, and the Zhentilar will attack any who venture into their reach. The Knights of the North may well prove enemies of the PCs, or provide timely rescues. In short, this frontier land is brim-full of adventures for all who seek them. If things grow slack, the North can always have a Gold Rush.

In His Majesty's Spacial Service

The Mithril Serpent



Mithril Serpent Vital Stats:

Tonnage: 29
Hull points: 29
Crew: 1/32
MC: A
Landing: land (yes)
water (yes)
AR: 4
Saves as: metal
Power type: major helm
SR: as per helmsman
Cargo: 18 tons
Kl: 125 feet
Bl: 15 feet

Mithril Serpent Map Key

1. Light catapult crew: 1
2. Light ballista crew: 1
3. Major helm
4. Cabins
5. Captain's cabin
6. Pantry/galley
7. Cargo hold
8. Brig/cargo
9. Cargo doors
10. secret cargo room 1/2 ton
11. Meditation chamber

An AD&D® game SPELLJAMMER® Adventure for six characters

by Tom Prusa and Sam Adams

Background for the DM™

In His Majesty's Spacial Service takes place in the sphere of Korvspace. A predominately elven civilization has controlled the inner sphere for the past two hundred years. The home planet of this empire is Korvada. A second planet, Teirze, has been thoroughly colonized, and a third, Sidar, is being actively explored and colonized. Sidar, along with the asteroid belt known as Kleggra's Bones, is considered the frontier of the Korvadan empire. The Imperial Navy maintains ports in the belt, which also act as ports of entry for traders and havens for the free traders who prospect the belt. The navy's main task is to defend the sphere from the ever-present threat of the Illithids. Trade and regular patrols by the Imperial Navy make Korvspace a busy place. Of course, with successful trade comes piracy. To deal with this menace, the empire has employed adventuring mercenary companies as pirate-hunters.

The PCs have become mercenaries for whatever reason happens to fit the campaign. The PCs might be seeking a reward or the emperor's favor. They might have lost their ship, or their ship might have become damaged and require extensive repairs. In any event, the PCs should receive a monthly stipend for their work, plus bonuses for extraordinary accomplishments. The DM should set the amounts to fit the campaign.

The PCs are free to use their own ship. However, the empire offers the PCs *The Mithril Serpent*, a modified viper class ship. The ship also comes with a helmsman, Noda, a human specialty priestess of Ptah.

The PCs' duties have taken them to the planet Sidar, where they quickly are drawn into a most enigmatic situation. The Imperial Governor asks them to check on a remote mining settlement, where the PCs find the entire population has disappeared. In the course of their investigation, they find evidence that the townspeople have been kidnapped by the infamous Mindflayer pirate, Willbender. Unbeknownst to the PCs, Willbender plans to sell the townsfolk to the Neogi for a fat profit. Willy decided this is much easier than attacking heavily guarded merchant ships.

By the time the PCs confront Willy, the neogi have already picked up their slave cargo.

Players' Background

You and your stalwart companions have accepted an imperial commission and are now members of the empire's Spacial Service. Your first assignment was simple, even a bit dull. You delivered a batch of communiques to Duke Martisan, Governor of Sidar.

However, you have learned that a shipment of valuable mithril ore from the newly opened mines of Fort Hope (a small village in a remote part of Sidar) is almost a week overdue. The Duke has asked you to check in on the miners before returning to Korvada, since your ship can get to Fort hope in hours instead of the week it would take the planetary garrison to get a detachment there.

You decided perhaps that would be a good idea—a band of troublesome orcs or giants or whatever is delaying the shipments might provide some excitement.

Fort Hope

After three hours of flight, you can see the vast Barrier Mountains looming on the horizon. Minutes later, you are flying over the farms of Fort Hope. It is early afternoon, but you see no people. There are cattle grazing aimlessly in the freshly harvested fields. The town comes into view moments later. There are perhaps a score of buildings lining the road through town. The road leads east past the farms back toward Tarselan (the capital) and west to the mines located in the foothills outside of town. The fort itself, though small, dominates the town. There are no people in the streets or visible at the fort. Though the air is brisk, you see no tell-tale smoke of hearth fires.

The PCs easily can land their ship on the road or in the fields next to the fort. Allow the PCs time to search as much of the town as they wish.

Only locations with relevant clues are listed below. All of the structures have several things in common. All fires, such as hearths, the forges in the smithy, the baker's oven, etc., have burned out. On a successful Intelligence check PCs can deduce the fires burned out four days ago.

Items are laying out in the homes and shops as if they had been hastily forgotten.

All of the town's livestock is grazing on the chaff and grasses outside of town, having obviously broken out of the stables and barns.

Any building not described below contains only the normal tools of the trade and furnishings common to a small frontier town.

If the PCs examine the road itself, they find great indentations in the dirt at each end of town, as if some large heavy object had settled there. This is where the pirates dropped the anchors of their hammerships.

There are more clues in the following locations:

1. The Fort: Four elven bodies in imperial uniforms lie just inside the gate. One corpse bears the insignia of a garrison commander. The three common soldiers appear to have been slain while trying to close the gate. The commander's body reveals a more ghastly clue. There is an expression of complete horror frozen on the corpse's face, his long sword is still in his hand in a death grip. But the most terrible sight is the hole punched in his forehead right above the eyes. A successful Intelligence check by any PC reveals that the commander's brain was removed.

A search of the fort reveals two wagons loaded with ore. Nothing has been looted from inside the fort.

If a *speak with dead* spell is used on any of the bodies they reveal the following:

- Just after nightfall, four days ago, the pirates landed. They took the town by surprise and were in the streets before the garrison could respond.
- The pirates rounded up the citizens and herded them aboard their two ships.
- A handful of the miners fled to the fort. As the soldiers attempted to secure the gate, a band of pirates attacked. The pirates killed the soldiers, and the pirate leader, a mindflayer, killed the commander.

2. The Grain Warehouse: This building is only three-fourths full, even though the harvest was just completed a few weeks ago. The pirates took enough grain to feed their slave cargo.

3. The Smithy: This contains the usual assortment of tools and weapons that are here for repair. A successful Wisdom check reveals that there isn't a single length of chain left in stock.

When the PCs tire of the investigation or think they have arrived at the truth of what happened, they have several options. They can speed into wildspace hoping to pick up the trail, go back to Tarselan and report to the governor, or head for the nearest royal navy base, Port Kazdeyn.

If the PCs report to the governor, Martisan carefully questions the PCs about what they found at Fort Hope. He is relieved to learn that the ore is intact, but concerned about his missing subjects. He directs the PCs to go to Port Kazdeyn and report to Commodore Ricard. Martisan is confident that the Commodore will help the PCs locate the raiders. If the PCs mention bonus payments, the governor offers them between 100 and 500 gp (DM picks the amount) for their work at Fort Hope and assures them that the empire will compensate even more generously for tracking down the pirates.

Flow Barnacles

Run this encounter after the PCs return to wildspace. A school of flow barnacles lies in the ship's path. If the PCs have posted no watch or no one is on deck, their first indication of trouble will be a series of loud thumps against the hull. The helmsman knows only that several big objects have struck the hull and are clinging to it. If there are one or more PCs on deck, have them make a surprise roll at −3. Four flow barnacles attack each PC who is on deck. Surprised PCs are attacked at +4 with no defensive Dexterity modifiers. All barnacles that miss characters strike the ship and do six points of damage each round; remember that every 10 points of damage equals one hull point of damage to the ship, so the PCs should remove the barnacles quickly. The helmsman can "feel" this damage to the ship. At least half of the barnacles adhering to the ship are on the hull below the gravity plane. This should provide the PCs with some additional challenge to the task of removing the creatures.

About three hours after leaving Sidar, you see a score or more objects the size of a human head jetting toward you over the ship's bow. They have rounded, spiny shells and masses of writhing tentacles.

Flow Barnacles (30): Int Non; AL N; AC 4; MV 3; HD 1; hp 6 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 6 or 7; SZ T (9″); ML 20;

XP 35 each.

A flow barnacle's three beaks inflict six points of damage each round if the creature attaches itself to a ship's hull. A barnacle attached to a character drains nutrients for seven points of damage each round. It takes at least 33 points of strength to tear a living barnacle away from a host, and this inflicts 2-5 points of damage.

The Survivor

Suddenly, you feel a change in the ship's speed. The reason is soon apparent; there is a wrecked damselfly scout ship drifting off the port bow. Its brightly enameled wings are shattered, and there are large holes in the hull. You can barely make out the Imperial Navy emblem on the bridge.

The PCs can maneuver alongside and grapple the wreck. If they board, they find the ship nearly destroyed. The afterdeck apparently was hit with fire. There are two bodies on the aft deck beside the burnt framework of a ballista. There is debris blocking the hatch to the bridge. It can be removed in one round by two or more characters. On the bridge is another body collapsed in the helm. This is Marin, the elven helmsman—he is alive, but badly injured. If rescued, Marin is grateful, very respectful to the PCs, and eager to avenge his dead captain. He can tell the PCs the following:

- The scout ship, *Paxel,* was attacked by pirates three days ago and the officers were killed. Marin was knocked unconscious by spelljammer shock.
- The pirates were headed for Kleggra's Bones and were in a hurry as they did not stop to make sure there were no survivors or to take the ship.
- He needs to get to Port Kazdeyn as soon as possible to report the loss to the Navy.
- Commodore Ricard has access to the most recent charts of the asteroid belt and scout reports of pirate activity. The Commodore is known to be a staunch supporter of the empire.
- The pirates had a hammership and were heavily armed.

Marin: S 10, I 16, W 14, D 14, C 15, Ch 14; AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; HD 6 (wizard 6); hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA None (no spells currently in memory; SZ M; ML 20; XP 500 (for rescuing)

Port Kazdeyn

As you approach Port Kazdeyn, an elven flitter hails you. After a few words with the guardboat, you are directed to a berth and word of your arrival is on its way to Commodore Ricard. An adjutant and two elven clerics await you as you dock. The two elven clerics take Marin away to be treated and make his report. The adjutant takes you to see Commodore Ricard.

The commodore expects the PCs to recount their experiences up to this point. The commodore agrees to gather the latest maps of the constantly shifting rocks that comprise Kleggra's Bones, and he tells the PCs that more scouts are due in over the next few hours.

If the PCs have role played the audience with the commodore well, the commodore invites them to be his guests at the Spacefarer's Inn. After the meal, they can rest in the officers' quarters, where suitable rooms have been provided. If the PCs fail to impress the commodore, they still are directed to await the scouting reports at the inn, but they have to pay their own bill.

The Spacefarer's Inn

The ever-hovering adjutant is instantly there to see you to the inn and inform Nelson, the owner, to serve you anything you want and bill it to the commodore.

You are alone in the Inn's common room, except for a giff officer and his odd crew drinking at the bar. From the look of them, they are obviously one of the mercenary crews hired by the Navy as pirate hunters. As you start to enjoy your meal, one of them loudly says to the other, "Look! It's some messenger boys."

There are six mercenaries. They are the crew of the *Iron Fist:* Captain Maximillian, a giff in a gray military uniform with small medals adorning the chest; Rat and Long Tom, two skinny humans dressed like normal sailors; Scalehead, a lizardman with elaborate tattoos covering large portions of his body; Rodac, a balding man wearing the garb of a cleric of Ares; and Korel, a half-elven mage. If the PCs ignore the first exchange, the mercenaries continue to loudly insult the party's manners and clothing. At the point where the PCs are ready to take physical action against their detractors, Maximillian steps forward and suggests a competition to see which are the real sailors in the room. Max suggests a test of skill and a test of strength. Two of the PCs will compete at knife throwing against a target on the far wall of the room with Rat and Long Tom, and two will compete against Scalehead and Rodac in arm wrestling. He and one of the PCs will serve as judges, and Korel and the remaining PC will hold the bets.

No matter what the PCs do, a group of elven sailors enters the bar and starts egging on the PCs to "show the bounty hunters who their betters are." The party is free to choose who will compete in each test. If the PCs accept the challenge, the sailors cheer and start laying side bets on the PCs. If the PCs insist on fighting the crew of the *Iron Fist,* Maximillian and his crew beat a hasty retreat, as they don't wish to be arrested. The NPCs' flight is assured when a large contingent of elven guards appears on the scene to restore order.

Knife throwing: Each contestant throws three knives at a target 30 feet away. They receive points for each throw. The team with the highest total wins.

The target is similar to an archery target. There is a red circle in the center and yellow, blue, green, and white circles around the center. The center is AC −1, the yellow is AC 1, the blue is AC 3, the green is AC 5, and the white is AC 7. Any throw that does not hit at least AC 7 misses the target.

Points: bullseye (red) 10, yellow 4, blue 3, green 2, white 1, miss 0.

Korel attempts to cheat for his side by using his *ring of telekinesis* to aid Rat and Long Tom. If the PC with Korel makes a successful Intelligence check, he or she sees Korel's ring glow each time his crewmates throw. If the throwing PC makes a successful Intelligence check, he notices the knives veering a bit right at the end of their flight. If the PCs notice and deduce what is happening, the giff concedes the knife throw. Because of the speed of the thrown daggers, Korel can affect the throws only enough to make each man's throw one result better (i.e. a yellow hit becomes a bullseye).

Long Tom and Rat: Int Average; AL

CN; AC 8; MV 12; HD 8 (fighter 8); hp 71, 59; THAC0 11 (bonuses for dexterity and knife specialization included); #AT 2; Dmg 1-4 +2; SZ M; ML 11; XP 200 each (for defeating in throwing contest)/ 50 each (for being defeated in knife throwing contest)

The two fighters have pulled this scam before with Korel and are very confident of its success.

Arm wrestling: If Maximillian's crew lost or were discovered cheating in the knife throwing competition, they try to crush the PCs in this event. Of course, they also attempt to cheat again. Rodac is wearing a *girdle of hill giant strength.* It is very elaborate and easy to notice, but its magic is not readily apparent. If the PCs tell Maximillian the *girdle* is magical, Rodac grudgingly removes it before the match.

Both pairs of contestants start at the same signal. They begin with elbows together and hands locked in the vertical position. Each round, the contestants roll normal Strength checks. If both contestants make the check, the one who had the *highest* successful roll advances his or her opponent's arm one-fourth of the way to the tabletop. If both fail the check, or if both checks succeed with the same dice number, there is no change in position and the match goes on. If one contestant succeeds and one loses, the successful character pins the opponent's arm.

Rodac: Int Average; AL NE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 9 (priest 9); hp 60; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 +7; SA Strength 19 with *girdle,* 16 without; SZ M; ML 11; XP 200 (for defeating at arm wrestling)/ 50 (for being defeated at arm wrestling)

Magic Items: *Bracers of defense AC 4, girdle of hill giant strength*

Rodac is very hot-tempered and violent. If he loses he will kick the table over and storm out.

Scalehead: Int Average; AL LN; AC 5; MV 12; HD 9 (fighter 9); hp 68; THAC0 12; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8 + 1/1-8 + 1/1-4; SA Strength 16; SZ M; ML 11; XP 200 (for defeating at arm wrestling)/50 (for being defeated at arm wrestling)

Scalehead speaks pidgin Common, and taunts his opponent continuously during the match.

Max the giff will be honest in the judging and concedes any contest between individuals where the PCs have caught someone cheating. To Max it is all right to cheat, but not to get caught. Korel surrenders any bets lost by the crew, or if his people won, loudly and gleefully counts their winnings.

Win or lose, the crew of the *Iron Fist* departs after the contests. The PCs have time to finish their meal, then a messenger comes rushing into the inn to tell them that Commodore Ricard has summoned them.

A Briefing from the Commodore

The commodore and Marin await you when you arrive at the commodore's office. Apparently, the base clerics have ministered to Marin well.

You are just getting settled into the commodore's comfortable chairs when a clerk with an armload of maps enters the office.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the commodore begins, "I believe we have located the area from which your pirates—Willy the Squid and his crew—are operating. According to our scouts, we have had several distant sightings of unknown ships in a remote area that is lightly patrolled. Since your group has been on their trail most recently. I offer you first crack at them. Marin has volunteered to accompany you as a helmsman since he knows that part of the Bones as well as anyone. And, as he has pointed out to me, you may well need all your spellcasters available against vicious scum like Willy and his jetsam of a crew.

"From our most recent scouting reports, we can assume Willy has at least two spellcasters with him, and we suspect this illithid pirate has a base within Kleggra's Bones about here."

The commodore indicates a section of asteroids at least 200 miles across.

"I leave it up to you as to whether to take Marin along, but I know he would serve well. Your ship has been restocked and some minor barnacle damage repaired. You may depart when you will. Good luck! I shall send word to His Imperial Majesty of your pursuit."

The commodore has no additional information about Willy the Squid for the PCs. It is up to the PCs to locate Willy and bring back the details to the commodore.

The PCs are free to decline Marin's help, they can even leave Noda behind if they are using their own ship instead of *The Mithril Serpent.* If Marin does accompany them, he helps Noda man the spelljammer helm so that any PC spellcasters can renew their spells.

The commodore is quite willing to authorize whatever bonus the DM thinks is reasonable for the campaign. He offers the PCs a small bonus (25-100 gp) for each Fort Hope villager returned alive, and additional rewards for slaying or capturing Willy the Squid.

The Scavvers

On the second night out from Port Kazdeyn, three night scavvers attack the PCs' ship. If no watch has been posted, the scavvers take up residence near a heavy weapon mount (the bow catapult if the PCs are using *The Mithril Serpent*). If there is a watch, roll for surprise. If the watch is surprised, the scavvers attack immediately. Otherwise, they attack warily, concentrating on a smaller or weaker opponent.

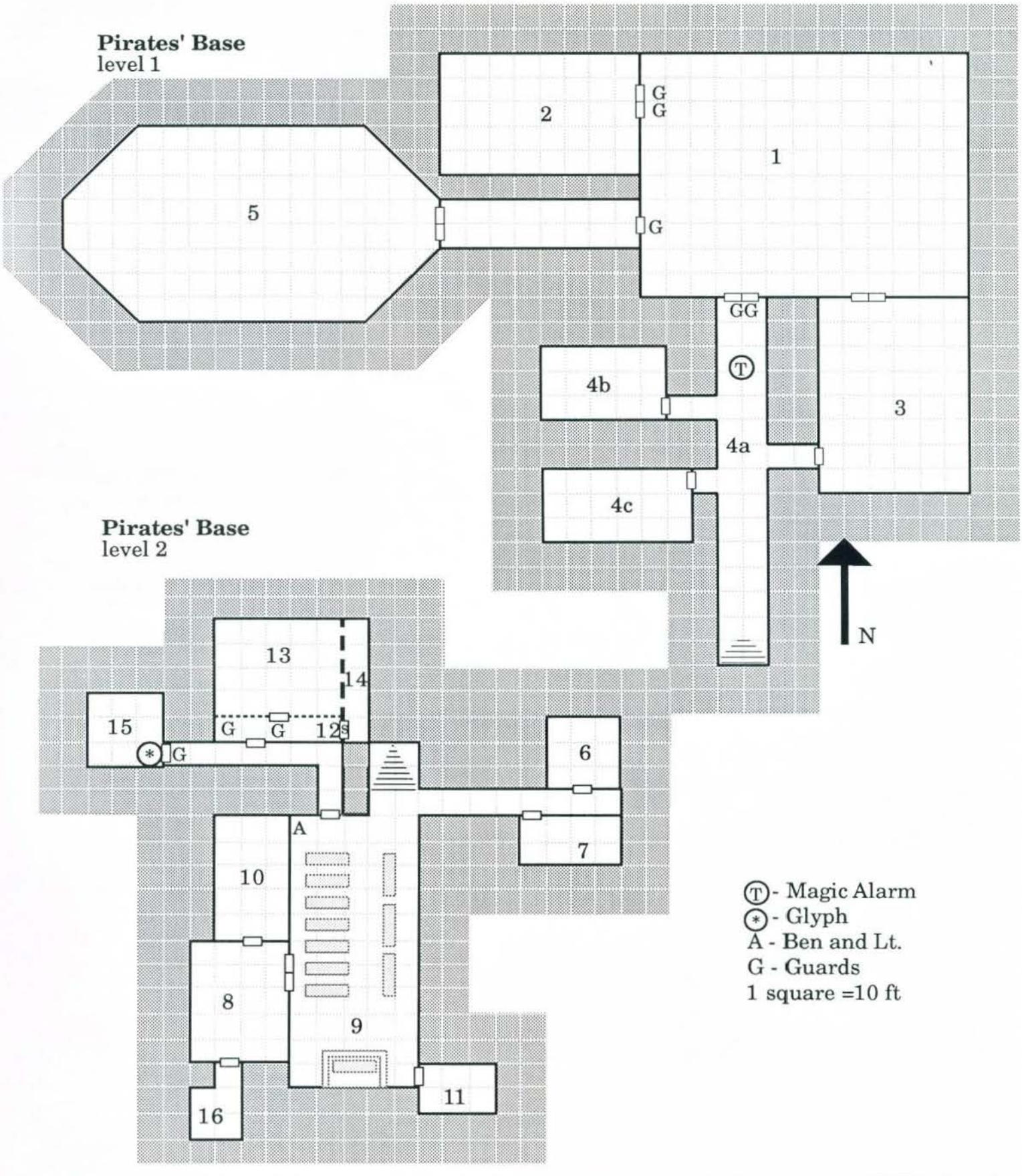
Night Scavvers (3): Int Animal; AL N; AC 3; MV 18; HD 6; hp 45, 41, 40; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10; SZ H (15'); ML 9; XP 975 each.

A night scavver can swallow man-sized or smaller opponents on a "to hit" roll of 19 or 20. Swallowed victims can cut their way out only if they have a type S weapon shorter than 3' long in hand when swallowed. The scavver has an internal armor class of 7, and if it suffers any internal damage at all it brings the swallowed victim back to its mouth, where it delivers a bite attack at +4 "to hit." Then it automatically swallows the victim again. A scavver must be killed for the victim to escape. A swallowed victim dies after six rounds inside the scavver and is utterly digested after 12 turns.

Oyutu the Watcher

You are close enough to Kleggra's Bones to drop out of spelljamming speed. Now all you have to do is carefully enter the asteroid field, avoid being dashed to bits in the jumble of rocks, and find the notorious Willy the Squid and his band of cutthroats.

Have the players indicate on the ship's deck plan where they are standing and what they are doing. This area of space is chocked with jagged chunks of rocks


Pirates' Base
level 1
2
G
G
1
5
G
GG
T
4b
3
4a
4c
Pirates' Base
level 2
N
13
14
15
G
G
12
S
*
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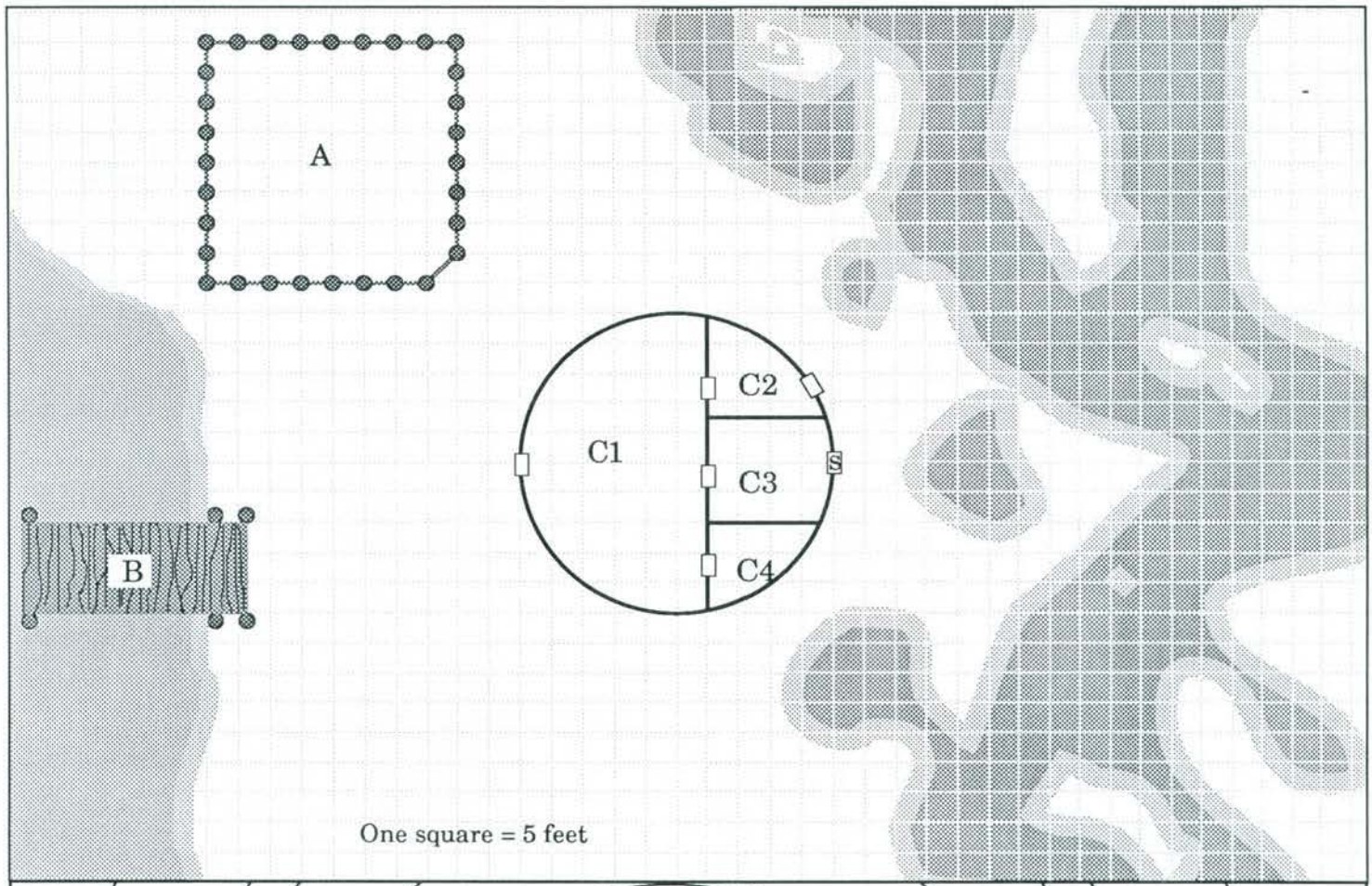
11
16
T - Magic Alarm
* - Glyph
A - Ben and Lt.
G - Guards
1 square =10 ft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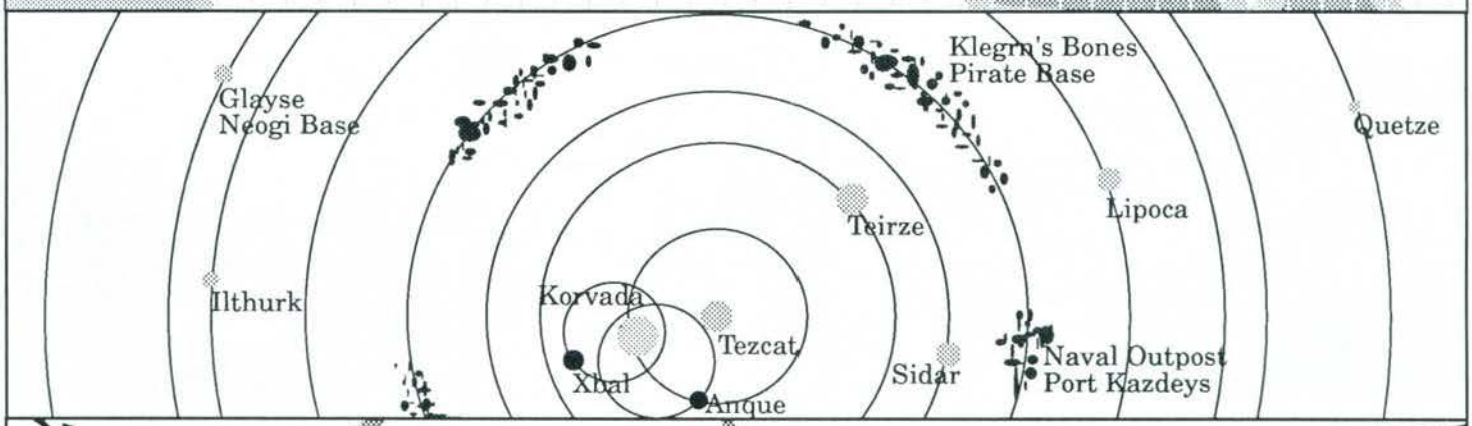
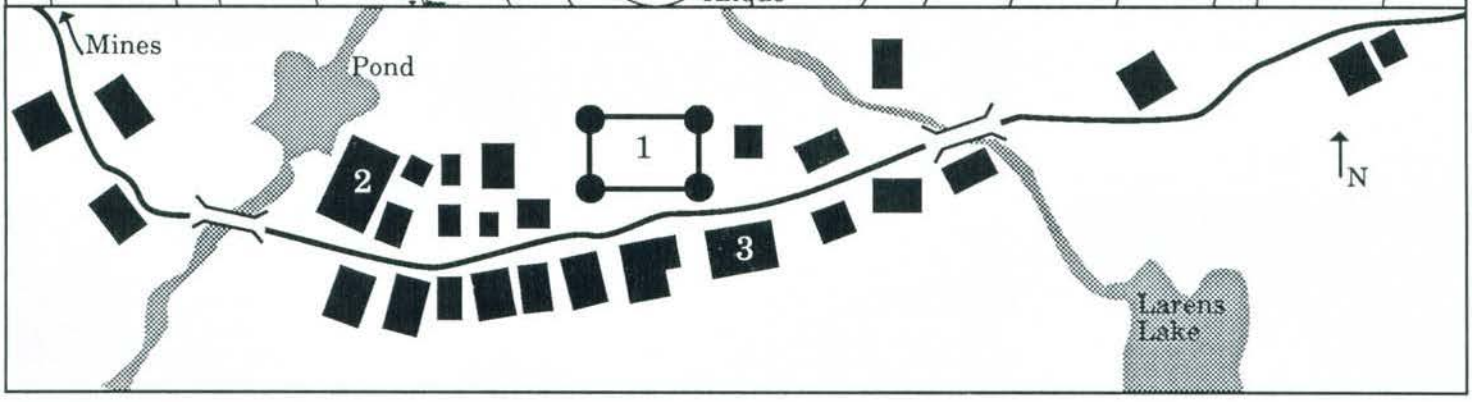
One square = 5 feet


Klegrin's Bones
Pirate Base
Glayse
Neogi Base
Quetze
Lipoca
Teirze
Ilthurk
Korvada
Tezcat
Xbal
Anque
Sidar
Naval Outpost
Port Kazdeys


Mines
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Larens
Lake

in many different sizes. Willy the Squid and his pirates know several safe passages through the debris, but the PCs' ship is in some danger as they blunder along, looking for the pirate base.

If the PCs aren't wary, their ship will take damage. The helmsman must make an Intelligence check at a −2 penalty each hour or the ship suffers 1-4 points of hull damage from a collision. If the check roll is a "20" the ship suffers a critical hit. The helmsman gains a +1 bonus to the check for every two characters assigned to lookout duty, but a roll of 19 or 20 still fails.

Read the following when the PCs have been dodging rocks for an hour:

> This is nerve wracking! You are surrounded by literally tons of rocks, all tumbling through wildspace. Suddenly, one of your lookouts lets out a whoop. There's something alive out there, just beyond your air envelope. You can make out the body of a large reptile approximately 20 feet long. It is carrying something entwined in its tail.
>
> The creature, which resembles a huge snake with a very draconian head, seems to be frolicking among the asteroids, agilely evading several potential collisions in the short time you watch it. It seems to have taken an interest in you, and is looping its way toward you with an expression that seems to be a silly grin.

The being is Oyutu, a sarphardin. Oyutu has been watching this area and is curious about the new arrivals in the neighborhood. If the PCs attack, Oyutu gains a +7 bonus to armor class and saving throws due to cover. If the attack misses, Oyutu sticks his head into the PCs' air envelope and yells "Now cut THAT out!" If the attack hits, or the PCs persist in attacking, Oyutu launches a spell assault. Read the following if the PCs remain friendly:

> The serpentine creature comes alongside your ship. It pokes its head over the rail and stares at you. Then it mutters a loud "mmmm-hummm" and proceeds to peer at you more closely. You're not sure, but it certainly seems to be smiling.

Oyutu is glad to converse with the PCs if they don't attack. Oyutu has been watching the pirates because he finds them very amusing. Oyutu considers himself a superior being, but is actually somewhat naive. He doesn't realize that other beings might not find the pirates amusing. Oyutu is very curious about the PCs, their ship, and the sphere in general. Work the following information into Oyutu's gossip if the PCs don't think to ask the right questions.

- Oyutu has been watching a very strange collection of beings living in one of the big rocks.
- A very big, odd-looking ship visited the rock several days ago, and then left heading out toward the crystal shell. Oyutu had never seen such strange beings as the ones on the big ship. This was a neogi spider ship. If the PCs press Oyutu for details he can describe the ship (a hull like a big, black, shiny coconut with long fingers coming out the front) and the crew (people with rather attractive, snake-like heads and lots of legs that looked something like the "fingers" on their ship).
- The "rock-people" land their ship in a large pit on the rock and they grow plants in another large hole with glass over it. They actually live in the rock.
- A small number of the "rock-people" left with their ship about two days ago. The rest are still in the rock.

If the PCs explain to Oyutu why the pirates are bad, he will gladly lead the party to the base. He will then pick a large, comfortable rock nearby and watch what follows.

If the PCs don't get Oyutu to lead them, they must search the asteroids for 3d6 hours before locating the pirate base.

Oyutu: Int Supra-Genius; AL CG; AC 5; MV 6, Fl 20 (A), Sw 18; HD 8+8; hp 66; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 2-12/1-2; MR 36; SZ H (20'); ML 15; XP 3,000 (for being lead to pirates).

Oyutu can entangle opponents with a successful melee hit. Entangled opponents take two points of constriction damage and can be bitten automatically. Entangled characters may make a Strength check once per round to break free; if successful they suffer only one point of constriction damage. Oyutu regenerates one hit point every four rounds and is immune to 1st-3rd level illusions and to *cause fear, command, forget, friends, hypnotism, ray of enfeeblement* and *scare.*

Magical Items: *Staff of power* (11 charges) held in the tail.

Spells remaining: *Charm person, read magic, hold portal, wall of fog, ESP, invisibility, improved phantasmal force, haste, dispel magic, wall of ice*

Willy the Squid

As the ship approaches the asteroid, the PCs see a large excavation on the surface where the pirates land their ship. The ship is not here now. There are three guards in the landing pit. They are lazy and overconfident. If the PCs land immediately, the guards will not notice. If the PCs spend more than one round observing the pit, the guards will sound an alarm. A large glass dome is visible just beyond the pit. This covers a greenhouse which the pirates use to refresh their air envelope. The only obvious means of entry to the base are the pit and the greenhouse dome. The dome is ordinary glass and can be broken easily, but a break has a 2 in 6 chance of alerting the guard at the door to the corridor. If the PCs enter through the pit, make normal surprise checks for the guards. If the guards are surprised and overpowered in two rounds or less, they cannot sound an alarm. If the guards are not surprised they call out and six more pirates come rushing out from area 3.

Area 1: This large open pit contains a cradle-like structure that allows the pirates to land their modified hammership here. Three guards are stationed here at the west doors. Each has a horn, which he can sound as an alarm.

Area 2: This is a large storeroom filled with common ship's supplies (rope, tar, spars, ammo for weapons, etc.)

Area 3: This is the repair shop. The room is full of lumber, rope, and tools. There also is a small forge. Six pirates are at work here repairing various pieces of equipment.

Area 4: This is a barracks with two guards posted at 4a. They are armed with light crossbows and sabres. Ten feet beyond the guards a magical alarm has been placed in the hall. Anyone passing the spot without uttering the password "Willbender," activates a *magic mouth* which yells "Fire in the Hole!" until deactivated by the password. This alerts the pirates in area 4b and 4c.

If an alarm horn or the *magic mouth* sounds, 10 pirates rush out of 4b to the hall to deal with the intruders. If the PCs manage to avoid the alarms, these

pirates remain in 4b playing cards and drinking. There are nine pirates in area 4c sleeping and awaiting their turn at watch. If an alarm sounds, they go to the top of the stairs at the end of the corridor and attempt to hold the intruders back until the officers and spell-casters arrive.

Pirates (28): Int Average; AL NE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3 (fighter 3); hp 25 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 2-7; SZ M; ML 10; XP 65 each.

Area 5: The greenhouse dome is two stories tall. It contains trees and miscellaneous greenery for air and a small garden plot for food. There is no one in the greenhouse when the PCs arrive.

Area 6: Two clerics and a mage share this room. It contains only personal effects and their spell and prayer books.

Area 7: The officers bunk here. Willy's four lieutenants and the first mate share this room.

Area 8: This is the kitchen. Five slaves work here. When the fighting starts, they hide in area 10.

Area 9: The pirates dine, celebrate, etc. in this common room. The room is full of long wood tables and benches. There is a raised platform at one end with three large chairs and a table. This is where Willy and the ranking pirates sit during meals and celebrations. At present only Willy, the wizard Darkstar, the clerics One-eye and Aryx, the first mate Ben Blade and Willy's four lieutenants are here. They are planning their next raid.

Even if the PCs managed to get to the lower level without triggering an alarm, the NPCs are expecting them. Undoubtedly the PCs made some noise upstairs. Ben and the four lieutenants hide in the northwest corner, ready to leap out behind the party. Willy and Darkstar are on the platform. The clerics stand in front of the platform with four objects laying at their feet. They are just finishing spell-casting as the party enters the room. The three pirates posted as guards in areas 13 and 15 enter the room on the second round of combat. As the PCs enter the room, Willy stands and, the PCs hear a voice in their minds.

"So you are the ones who have dared to invade my domain. That was a very foolish action on the part of such supposedly elite agents of the empire. However, never let it be said that Willbender was not a good host. I have prepared a very special surprise for you. I imagine you came here seeking your missing villagers. Unfortunately, my men have delivered most of them to my new allies already. But just so you won't be totally disappointed, One-eye has brought four of your soldier elves from the fort to greet you. It seems they just didn't appreciate our hospitality."

Four bodies arise from the floor. They are barely recognizable as garrison soldiers from Fort Hope. They draw their long swords and look to One-eye. One-eye points to you and commands, "KILL THEM!"

One-eye has used an *animate dead* scroll on the corpses, while Aryx cast *revenance* from a scroll to keep the zombies from being turned. The zombies form a line in front of the clerics and advance on the party. Meanwhile, Ben and the lieutenants close from the rear. Willy and Darkstar watch until the PCs seem to be gaining the advantage before joining in the attack. At the end of the second round of combat, the additional guards arrive.

Zombie elves (4): Int Non; AL N; AC 8; MV 6; HD 2; hp 20 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SZ M; ML 20; XP 65 each.

Zombies are immune to *sleep, charm, hold, death,* and cold-based spells. Poison and paralysis don't affect them. They are utterly fearless. Their slowness causes them to always lose initiative vs. the PCs. A vial of holy water does 2d4 points of damage if it strikes a zombie.

One-eye: Int High; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 7 (priest 7); hp 34; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+3; SA spells; SZ M; ML 14; XP 2,000.

One-eye is an elven priest of Hades, as such he can see in all forms of darkness and can create darkness in a 10-foot radius once a day. He is tall for an elf (5′ 10″) and has a pale, gaunt complexion. One-eye wears no patch over the empty left eye socket, as he likes the effect it has on people. One-eye has a Wisdom of 17 (+3 magical attack adjustment).

Magical Items: Staff of striking (9 charges) bracers of defense AC 4

Spells remaining: *Curse, command, cause light wounds, create air, protection from good, silence, aid, hold person, heat metal, resist fire, dispel magic, cause blindness, cause serious wounds*

Aryx: Int Average; AL CE; AC 6; MV 12; HD 4 (priest 4); hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6+1; SA spells; SZ M; ML 8; XP 270.

Aryx is an elf and One-eye's acolyte. He can see in darkness, but has not gained the ability to create darkness. Aryx is an abject coward. However, he fears One-eye and Willy much more than any PC. He is armed with a flail. Aryx has a Wisdom of 16 (+2 magical adjustment).

Magical Items: *Ring mail +1*

Spells remaining: *Endure cold, command, cause light wounds* (×2), *warp wood, hold person*

Lieutenants (4): Int Average; AL NE; AC 5; MV 9; HD 5 (fighter 5); hp 42, 40, 39, 37; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 2-7; SZ M; ML 19; XP 270 each.

The lieutenants are fearless on their turf and will attack until killed or ordered otherwise by Ben or Willy. They are armed with sabres and daggers.

Ben Blade: Int Average; AL NE; AC 2; MV 12; HD 8 (fighter 8); hp 74; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2-7+4; SZ M; ML 19; XP 1,400.

Blade has been with Willy for many years and is fiercely loyal. He is a large, wiry man, who obviously knows how to handle a sabre very well. He is specialized with the sabre giving him two attacks per round at +1 to hit and +2 to damage. He has a Strength of 17 and Dexterity of 16 (his statistics reflect these adjustments).

Guards (3): Int Average; AL NE; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3 (fighter 3); hp 25 each; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 2-7; SZ M; ML 10; XP 65 each.

Darkstar: Int Genius; AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 8 (wizard 8); hp 23; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA spells; SZ M; ML 12; XP 3,000.

Darkstar is a renegade elven wizard who was cast out of the regular navy. He joined Willy for revenge. He is cunning and devious. Darkstar will not waste his spells if he thinks the fighter-types are handling things. When he does join in, he casts *darkness 15′ radius* centered on enemy spell casters.

Next, he uses *hold person* on enemy fighters. If this doesn't work, he casts *slow* at the combatants, even though his own men will be in the area of effect. From then on he concentrates on individual targets, saving *invisibility* for an escape attempt. He will not cast his *lightning bolt* unless it is absolutely necessary.

Magical Items: *Cloak of protection +2, ring of protection +3*

Spells remaining: *Magic missile* (×2), *shield, color spray, invisibility, darkness 15' radius, blindness, hold person, slow, lightning bolt, polymorph other, fumble*

Willbender (Willy the Squid): Int Genius; AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; HD 8+4; hp 59; THAC0 11; #AT 4; Dmg Special; MR 90%; SZ M; ML 15; XP 8,000.

Willy can generate a *mental blast* once a round. This is a cone 60 feet long, five feet wide at the base, and 20 wide at the far end. Creatures within the area must save vs. wands at −4 or be stunned for 1d10+2 rounds. Willy also can use the following powers, once a round, as a 7th level caster: *suggestion, charm person/monster, ESP, levitation, astral projection,* and *plane shift.* All saving throws against these powers are at −4.

Willy is as arrogant and egotistical as all mindflayers. He is positive that he has the upper hand over the "inferior" PCs. If his men start to lose he begins to use his powers, but tries to avoid melee at all costs. As mentioned above, if the situation looks hopeless for Willy, or if he takes 30 or more points of damage, he uses his *plane shift* ability to escape.

Area 10: This is the food storeroom. The five kitchen slaves are hiding here. So is Sally of the Way, a 5th level priest of Ptah. Sally served as a backup spelljammer on an elven scout ship that fell prey to Willy. When the pirates crippled the ship and boarded it, Sally played dead, then she snuck aboard Willy's ship while the pirates looted the scout. She's been hiding out on the base for weeks.

Most of the slaves are terrified of the PCs. The slaves know nothing about the pirates' operations and are convinced that the PCs are going to kill or hurt them. Sally distrusts the slaves, and she believes they would have turned her in to gain favor with the pirates if they had discovered her hiding place before the PCs arrived. Sally has additional information for the PCs:

- The pirates had no prisoners in their brig when Sally arrived here. This made it very difficult to steal food from the pirates. Several days ago, the pirates' hammership returned with about 70 captives taken in a midnight raid on a village on one of the inner planets (these were the Fort Hope captives).
- The pirates made no secret of the fact the villagers were to be sold to the neogi. The neogi came for them yesterday.
- The neogi came for the slaves in a mindspider. It looked like there was a full complement of neogi and umber hulks aboard.
- When the mindspider took off, it headed toward the outer planets, probably toward Glayse. Sally overheard several pirates talking about a neogi base on one of the moons of Glayse.
- If Willbender, the mindflayer, escaped from the PCs, it's a good bet that the crew of the hammership soon will be warned about the attack on the pirate base.
- The neogi treat their slaves badly, and when a slave's usefulness ends, he becomes food.

Sally eagerly offers to subject herself to a *detect lie, know alignment,* or other divinations to prove herself. Noda does not know Sally, but can question Sally and confirm that she seems to be a genuine priest of Ptah.

Sally of the Way: S 13, I 15, W 17, D 14, C 13, Ch 15; AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; HD 5 (priest 5); hp 16; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA None (no holy symbol and no spells currently in memory; SZ M; ML 20; XP 1,000 (for rescuing and getting information).

Area 11: This is Willy's room. It is spartan, containing only a bed, a desk and a chair. A piece of parchment covered with strange, ugly-looking script lies on the desk. This a record of Willy's most recent sale to the neogi. It is written in a form of the mind flayer language interspersed with words from Neogi and Common. If the PCs decipher it magically or via the rogue read languages ability, they find a clear reference to the captives from Fort Hope. It also mentions a payment of 300 platinum pieces received from the neogi.

Area 12: This corridor slants slightly downward and leads to the brig and the treasure room.

Area 13: This large room serves as the brig. Iron bars separate the back 40×40 space from the rest of the room. From the look of it, it was recently occupied by a large number of people.

Area 14: This secret passage allowed the pirates to spy on the prisoners unobserved. Disguised slots in the wall allowed for missile fire into the brig in case of a disturbance. It is only accessible from the secret door in area 12.

Area 15: The thick, iron door to this room is locked (Willy had the key). There is a *glyph of warding* scribed inside the door, which does 10 points of fire damage to anyone not uttering the disarming phrase ("fame and plunder") before entering. The pirates have stored the following treasure here: 15 assorted gems worth 4,100 gp, 450 pp, 727 gp, 1,563 sp, 5,678 cp, a bale of rare silks and furs worth 2,000 gp, and 11 art objects worth 8,000 gp.

Sally is right about Willy. He fled to a secret bolt hole and warns the hammership's crew to stay away from the base. If the PCs decide to lie in wait for Willy or the hammership they will wait in vain. Also, if the PCs wish to collect their full bonus from Commodore Ricard, they should depart for Glayse without delay.

Purple Dragon

You have left the asteroid belt, and your ship is handling beautifully You are making good time toward the outer planets—you might just save all the villagers and get your full bonus yet.

There is an abrupt lurch as your ship drops out of spelljamming speed. Something big must be in the vicinity. There it is! A large ship is coming in from below. No, it is a creature, and it's moving fast. Your hearts race as huge purple coils wrap around the ship. The creature is a radiant dragon, and a big one, too! The dragon lifts a head the size of your cargo hold and looks you in the eyes. "Well little ones, what brings you to my part of space?"

This is Vundernomicas, a venerable radiant dragon who wants to give the

PCs a chance to admire a "superior" creature for awhile. If the party is properly respectful, the dragon could be quite helpful. Vundernomicas likes wine, and asks if the ship has any to spare. He drinks as much of wine as the PCs care to give (a whole wineskin is only one sip for Vundernomicas). If the party offers jewels or gems, Vundernomicas will cast clerical spells to help the party. The real help available from the dragon is information:

- The dragon did indeed see a mindspider fly by about two days ago, headed for Glayse. The dragon also saw another mindspider fly by one day ago. Now the PCs are passing through, and it's high time these visitors stopped to pay their respects.
- The closest portal out of Korvspace also lies near Glayse, which is a water world. There is really nothing else out there except a few asteroids.
- It is much better here. If the party would like to keep Vundernomicas company, the dragon would be glad to spend a week or 10 talking about how great dragons are.

The PCs can to talk to Vundernomicas as long as they wish, but the dragon has no other useful information. Vundernomicas inevitably turns the conversation back to the glories of dragons in general, and in Vundernomicas in particular. When the PCs are ready to leave, or if the players are starting to get bored with the dragon, the dragon unwraps himself.

If the party attacks, Vundernomicas uses *holy word* to stun the PCs. He then gives them a chance to apologize for their foolish actions. If they persist in attacking, he casts *flame strike*, which sets the rigging ablaze, then gives the ship a wing buffet and leaves.

Vundernomicas (venerable radiant dragon): Int Exceptional; AL CG; AC −5; MV 12, Fl 48 (B); HD 21; hp 161; THAC0 −1; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 2-20 + 10/2-20 + 10/4-40 + 10; MR 60%; SZ G (375' body); ML 18; XP 2,000 (for getting information).

Vundernomicas's breath weapon is an energy pulse that inflicts up to 20d12 + 10 points of damage; it has a range of 60 yards and can be broken into smaller pulses as Vundernomicas wishes (minimum size, 2d12 + 1), a save vs. breath weapons negates all damage from a pulse. Like all dragons, Vundernomicas can make kick, tail slap, wing buffet, and plummet attacks. A wing buffet attack made against a ship can knock all the ship's occupants off of their feet—just like a ship shaken critical hit. Vundernomicas can squeeze the PCs' ship, inflicting 1-6 hull points each round in addition to any other actions. Once a day Vundernomicas can use *corrupt* or *restore air, Bigby's interposing hand, Bigby's grasping hand,* and *wall of force* as an 18th level caster. Vundernomicas also can *shape change* three times a day.

Spells: *Cure light wounds* (×2) *command, bless, create water, detect magic, faerie fire, enthrall, heat metal, silence 15' radius, slow poison, warp wood, obscurement, locate object, stone shape, cure disease, remove curse, remove paralysis, dispel magic, free action, detect lie* (×2), *cure serious wounds* (×2), *neutralize poison, quest, flame strike, true seeing, raise dead, blade barrier, animate object, heal, transmute water to dust, holy word, fire storm, symbol, regenerate*

Sargasso

The party continues to fly toward the Neogi base. Unknown to them, there is a small uncharted sargasso (dead area) in space. Their path takes them directly toward it. There are two player descriptions provided. The first is to be read if an NPC is spelljamming, the second if a PC is spelljamming.

It has been two weeks since your encounter with Vundernomicas. Marin, Noda, and Sally have proven to be capable helmsmen, giving you plenty of time to relax. All of you are refreshed and rested, and your spellcasters have their full complement of spells. Suddenly, the ship lurches and begins to drift. You grab onto things, and manage to maintain your balance. The ship regains power a moment later. You can hear (the current helmsman) shouting, "Help me turn around—now!" What do you do?

It has been more than three weeks since you met Vundernomicas. All your spellcasters—except your current helmsman—have their full complement of spells memorized, and you should be getting close to the neogi base. Suddenly there is a lurch, your helmsman feels a sickening thump, and the ship begins to drift in space.

Just as suddenly, the ship regains power. What will you do?

No magic works here. This includes items, spells, and the spelljamming helm. The flow of this encounter must be adjusted to reflect who was spelljamming at the time, and what the reaction was. When a ship hits a sargasso its helm fails for one round, restarts for 1-3 rounds, and then dies completely. The only way out of a sargasso is to drift through, or to react quickly enough to change direction and get out before the spelljamming helm dies completely.

Noda, Marin, and Sally are experienced spelljammers and immediately try and reverse course if they are at the helm. This requires the rest of the crew to man the rigging. If the party dithers or even stops to ask questions, it will be too late. Any off-duty NPCs rush to the deck and start grabbing the rigging. If the PCs immediately jump into action and help to turn the ship, the ship drifts only an only an hour. Otherwise, the ship drifts for more than a day.

If a PC is at the helm, the NPC spellcasters rush onto the deck, grabbing the rigging and shouting at the helmsman to turn around. Unless the helmsman reacts immediately, the ship will be stuck in the sargasso for a week.

In either case, the players have exactly one minute of real time to react.

If the ship gets stuck in the sargasso, the NPCs become morose and despondent, particularly Sally. She is sure that they will drift here for the rest of their lives. She tells them what she knows about the sargassos. They are magic dead areas that occasionally occur in space. She hopes this is a small one, since it is not on any charts. But then, maybe everyone who found it has died here. She tells tales of ships found coming out of sargassos, all of the air fouled, and everyone dead. She has even heard of creatures turning to cannibalism, both for food, and to save dwindling air. She is very depressed. Marin and Noda confirm that the ship is helpless, but try very hard not to succumb to Sally's depression.

Try to give the impression that the PCs are in a lot of trouble, even if they are stuck for only an hour. If the PCs experiment, no spells or magical items work. An attempted spell fades from the caster's memory with no effect. Trying to use a charged item drains a charge, but also produces no effect.

Moon Over Glayse

At last, the neogi base. There is a small moon orbiting Glayse, a water world. The moon's atmosphere seems foul and murky, at least from up here. As you study the base, you spot two spider ships, and it occurs to you that it would be best to circle around to keep out of sight. If your ship has to tangle with a couple of mindspiders, you'll probably lose. Soon you are well out of sight of the base.

If the PCs are inclined to take on the neogi ships with *The Mithril Serpent*, they have a mutiny on their hands. The NPCs assume—correctly—that the vessel is no match for even one mindspider.

More than likely, the party will try to sneak into the neogi base. They can find a good landing place about five miles away. Once on the ground, the party can locate the base again with little difficulty. However, travel on the surface is unpleasant and dangerous. The ground is dotted with boiling sulfur pits that spew noxious fumes into the air. The five-mile walk to the base takes two hours. The NPCs stay to guard the ship unless the PCs order them to go along to the base.

Unless they are making a lot of noise, the PCs can remain unobserved as they approach. The base consists of a loading dock, a slave pen, and a large dome that houses the neogi and their slaves.

If the party checks out the base from the surface, they can get close enough to see that one spider ship is gone (it headed back into the system to go raiding). The prisoners are still in the pen, however. There is a pair of umber hulks with a neogi on guard. There also appear to be five human guards. The prisoners are still alive, although some of them are unconscious, and all of them look pretty dejected.

After entering the camp, the party has several options. They can attempt a lightning raid, killing the guards and getting the prisoners out fast. They can try to silently kill the guards and sneak the prisoners out. Or they can hit the dome and try to kill all the neogi and umber hulks. Let the party take as long as they want to decide their course of action.

The base is described below. The PCs' actions will determine how this encounter is played out. Remember that the Neogi are intelligent and will send reinforcements anywhere the PCs attack. If the party is overwhelming the guards, the neogi leaders will order the lesser neogi and their umber hulks to hold off the party while they attempt to escape.

The moon: The sulfur pits make the air foul. The neogi are accustomed to this foul air, and can fight normally. The umber hulks don't even notice it. The human guards and the PCs all fight at −2 to hit and +2 to initiative. Should someone actually end up in a sulfur pit, the character suffers 1-6 points of damage a round, and must make a Constitution check each round or pass out from the fumes.

A. The prisoners: The prison enclosure has a single gate, six feet wide and 10 feet high. The fence is 12 feet high all around and made of heavy wire mesh. The fence is AC 4. Each five-foot square section can withstand 20 points of damage; the fence is immune to fire, cold, and type B weapons. There are 63 prisoners still alive, although 12 of them are unconscious and quite a number are having trouble breathing.

Human Guards (5): Int Average; AL N; AC 2; MV 9; HD 7 (fighter 7); hp 60, 55, 45, 40, 38; THAC0 14; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1-8+2; SZ M; ML 10; XP 975 each.

These guards have a +2 to initiative due to the fouled air, and their THAC0s have been adjusted for the air, magic and strength. Sssissila, the neogi leader, has charmed them, and they fight to the death.

Umber Hulks (2): Int Average; AL CE; AC 2; MV 6, Br 1-6; HD 8+8; hp 70, 75; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 3-12/3-12/1-10; SA gaze causes *confusion;* SZ L (8′ tall, 5′ wide); ML 13; XP 4,000 each.

These are neogi guard's slaves, and fight to the death unless the neogi is slain.

Neogi (1): Int Average; AL LE; AC 2; MV 6; HD 5; hp 21; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA bite causes *slow* effect for 1-8 rounds, save vs. poison negates; SZ S (3′ tall); ML 12; XP 270.

This neogi keeps the umber hulks between himself and the PCs. He directs the guards, and fights only if he has no choice or if he can get an attack at an unsuspecting PC's back.

B. Loading Dock: The dock has space for two ships. Currently there is one ship docked. It is unoccupied, and the party may easily sneak aboard. The ship has a lifejammer. Unless someone wants to power up the ship by climbing inside the lifejammer, the PCs cannot fly it.

C. Barracks: This large dome has four rooms. There is a large central area where the lesser neogi sleep and eat; two small rooms, one for the leader, and one for the other spellcaster; and a food preparation area. There is a large entrance to the central area, and a smaller one to the kitchen. The areas are detailed below.

C1: There are currently four neogi and four umber hulks here. Unless alerted, the neogi are busy eating, and the umber hulks are waiting on them. There are several round tables and charts of Korvspace. The charts are very well marked, with the location of most of the settlements in the system clearly indicated. If the party breaks in here, the umber hulks attack immediately, and the neogi stay back where it is safe. Within two rounds, the two leaders and their umber hulks join the fray.

To the leaders, their own personal umber hulks are more important than the lesser neogi, and the lesser neogi are ordered into the fight.

Umber Hulks (4): Int Average; AL CE; AC 2; MV 6, Br 1-6; HD 8+8; hp 64, 60, 70, 71; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 3-12/3-12/1-10; SA gaze causes *confusion;* SZ L (8′ tall, 5′ wide); ML 13; XP 4,000 each.

Neogi (4): Int Average; AL LE; AC 2; MV 6; HD 5; hp 21; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA bite causes *slow* effect for 1-8 rounds, save vs. poison negates; SZ S (3′ tall); ML 12; XP 270 each.

C2: This is the kitchen. There is one thoroughly subdued troll cook and one prisoner, an unconscious elf lad. The troll will not fight, except in self defense. He is a fair cook, according to neogi standards, and an abject coward. If the party gets the drop on him, he drops to his knees and begs for his life. He is loyal to the neogi (charmed), and his begging is loud enough to be heard in the adjacent areas (C1 and C3). If the party wastes too much time here, any neogi in the dome order two of their surviving umber hulks to dig into the floor near the door, where they can come up and attack the party by surprise. When the PCs turn to face the umber

hulks, the troll attacks the PCs.

Troll: Int Low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 12; HD 6+6; hp 25; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 5-8/5-8/5-12; SD Regeneration; SZ L; ML 14; XP 1,400.

C3: This small room houses a pair of umber hulks and a neogi. If the neogi hears fighting or the troll begging, he casts *stoneskin* on himself and prepares to rush out and join the fray.

Umber Hulks (2): Int Average; AL CE; AC 2; MV 6, Br 1-6; HD 8+8; hp 74, 73; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 3-12/3-12/1-10; SA gaze causes *confusion;* SZ L (8′ tall, 5′ wide); ML 13; XP 4,000 each.

Neogi lieutenant: Int Average; AL LE; AC 2; MV 6; HD 5; hp 21; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA bite causes *slow* effect for 1-8 rounds, save vs. poison negates, spells as 7th level wizard; SZ S (3′ tall); ML 12; XP 650.

Spells remaining: *Stoneskin, lightning bolt, slow, web, detect invisible, knock, magic missile* (×2), *shocking grasp, message*

The lieutenant will first cast *stoneskin,* if he hasn't already, followed by *slow,* and then *magic missile.* If the opportunity presents itself, he'll use *web* or *lightning bolt.*

C4: This is Sssissila's room. It has a secret exit, not visible from the outside. If alerted, the captain casts *protection from normal missiles* and *haste* on himself and his two umber hulks. Otherwise, he casts *haste* first and orders his umber hulks to attack. He casts his other spells until he is out of magic, then orders the healthiest of the two umber hulks to come with him. While the remaining umber hulk blocks the exit, he opens the secret door and flees to the spider ship.

Umber Hulks (2): Int Average; AL CE; AC 2; MV 6, Br 1-6; HD 8+8; hp 74, 73; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 3-12/3-12/1-10; SA gaze causes *confusion;* SZ L (8′ tall, 5′ wide); ML 13; XP 4,000 each.

Sssissila: Int Average; AL LE; AC 2; MV 6; HD 5; hp 21; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA bite causes *slow* effect for 1-8 rounds, save vs. poison negates, spells as 8th level wizard; SZ S (3′ tall); ML 12; XP 650.

Spells remaining: *Polymorph other, charm monster, protection from normal missiles, haste, invisibility, flaming sphere, magic mouth, magic missile, shocking grasp, color spray*

When the battle begins to go badly for the neogi, Sssissila or his lieutenant orders one of the surviving umber hulks to kill as many prisoners as possible. This order is given in Neogi, a hissing sibilant language that the PCs probably don't understand. The disappearance of an umber hulk should be a clue, as well as the tone of the neogi's command, a "get even" kind of tone. Anyone not in melee can make a Wisdom roll to hear the command and notice at least the tone of voice. The umber hulk burrows through the rock, taking five rounds to reach the prisoners.

If the PCs rescue the prisoners, most of them are healthy enough to survive the trip back to Sidar without any special attention. The 13 unconscious prisoners, however, will die unless they receive treatment for poisoning. This can include *neutralize* or *slow poison* spells, or attention from a character with the healing or herbalism nonweapon proficiency.

Noda

10th Level Female Specialty Priestess of Ptah

STR: 15
INT: 17
WIS: 18
DEX: 10
CON: 15
CHA: 13

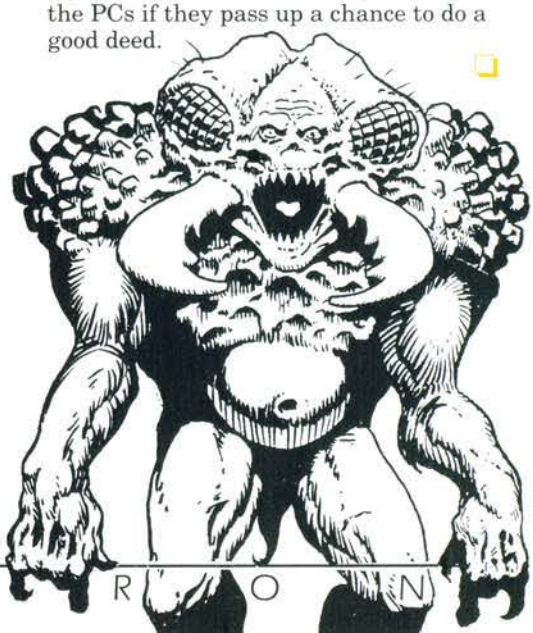
AC Normal: 0
AC Rear: 2
Hit Points: 57
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Elvish, Dwarvish
THAC0: 14
Age: 56
Height: 5′7″
Weight: 105 lbs.
Hair/Eyes: Gray/Blue

Weapon Proficiencies: Mace, flail, staff, lasso
Nonweapon Proficiencies: Healing (18), tracking (12), heraldry (Korvadan) (18), neogi lore (18), rope use (+2 "to hit" with lasso) (10), read/write Dwarvish (18), read/write Elvish (18), space-fighting, spelljamming (15)
Normal Items: Two weeks' rations, leather backpack, silver holy symbol, spell components, 50′ lasso, five sketches of neogi (for study), copy of the book entitled *Mind Spiders: Mistake or Abomination?* by Noda of Ptah, two changes of clothes, 123 silver pieces, waterskin, 55 platinum pieces, five vials of holy water, three flasks of oil, bullseye lantern
Magic Items: *Chain mail +3, shield +1, footman's mace +2, periapt of immunity to neogi poison, staff of curing* (16 charges), *potion of extra healing, Keoghtom's ointment* (two doses)
Spells/day: 6 6 4 3 2

As a priestess of Ptah, Noda has major access to the spheres of All, Astral, Charm, Creation, Divination, Healing, Necromancy, and Sun. She has minor access to the spheres of Elemental (air only) and Animal. She can turn undead as an 8th level cleric, use *crystal balls* (but not additional powers such as *clairaudience*, and usually cannot get lost. In any situation where she does not know exactly where she is, Noda can make a Wisdom check to determine how to get home. This does not reveal exactly where she is, just the direction where home lies. If she is in a place where directions are unreliable or on another plane, only those facts are revealed.

Noda has been a priestess of Ptah for many years and has spent most of her life exploring wildspace. She was once a prisoner on a neogi ship and escaped only because the neogi lost a battle with an imperial ship. Noda hates neogi, but has made an extensive study of them so she can slaughter them more efficiently.

Noda is accustomed to brisk military discipline, but realizes that the PCs are in charge on this mission. However, she is always on the lookout for evil and injustice, and will ceaselessly harangue the PCs if they pass up a chance to do a good deed.



Of Mechs And Manga

Kakui Items and Ideas To Add To Your Game

Karen S. Boomgarden

I'm happy to see there's a growing interest in source material for gaming based on Japanese animation (hereafter called "anime"). It's great to see those of you who enjoy FASA's Battletech or Paladium's Robotech games wanting to know where all those cool mechs came from in the first place. As a fan of animation and a gamer myself, I too know there's lots more out there than mech combat games present. That's the purpose of this article: letting you in on the fantastic wealth of anime and manga (Japanese comic books) source material for your games, mech and otherwise.

First, A Short Lesson in Japanese

Before I leap into the oceans of information I want to disseminate, I need to tell you about the romanization system I'll be using to represent Japanese words in English. There are some notable differences between the two languages, and they have a bearing on spelling.

The Japanese language doesn't recognize a difference between the consonants L and R, nor between B and V. The surname "Zabi" in the *Mobile Suit Gundam* series is sometimes rendered "Zavi" because of this. Likewise, the character "Rabi" from *Granzort* is sometimes spelled "Labi." I usually try to figure out which one is more common, and stick with that.

The five vowels (A-I-U-E-O, in their Japanese order) have only one sound each, unlike in English. These sounds are best represented by the mnemonic "Ah, we do get old." Long vowels in Japanese are held twice as long as "normal" ones. In the original kana (the name for the Japanese character sets, hiragana and katakana), long vowels are denoted by a "U" symbol following the vowel to be held. In English, the most common romanization system uses the letter "h" in this way. For instance, the name "Dangaioh" adds the "h" to denote that the "o" is long. (Some people feel it's just as correct to ignore the "long" marker; personally, I'd rather see it there. If the original Japanese requires a long vowel, why change it in romanization?)

There is no letter C in Japanese. Since a hard C is a K sound, and a soft C is an S sound, there's no need for a C. G is always hard; the soft G we hear in English is a J in Japanese. Fs are uncommon, except in the "FU" syllable (as in Fujisan, Mount Fuji).

When a syllable written in katakana (the simplest characters, used for writing words borrowed from other languages) and usually ending in "a" is followed by a short line, the vowel in that syllable is pronounced as though there were an "r" after it. One of the shows I'll mention in a later article, *Project Hades Zeorymer*, is an example of this. The name is spelled "ze-o-ra-i-ma—-" (each hyphen merely separates the syllables, for clarification, and do not appear in the kana; the final dash, however, does), so the final "a" is said "ar" or "er." The same thing happens in a word like "pa— -ti" (party).

But why, I hear you asking, if it's spelled "a" in the kana is it pronounced "er?" Well, folks, that's an oddity of romanization. If you get into studying the language, you'll find all the little ticks and quirks, too. There's a "feel" for this kind of transliteration/translation that comes with time and practice. Don't sweat the details for now, just sit back and enjoy.

There's lots more I'd tell you. However, for reading names and wondering how they're pronounced, or why they're spelled as they are, this is sufficient.

On to the Real Subject

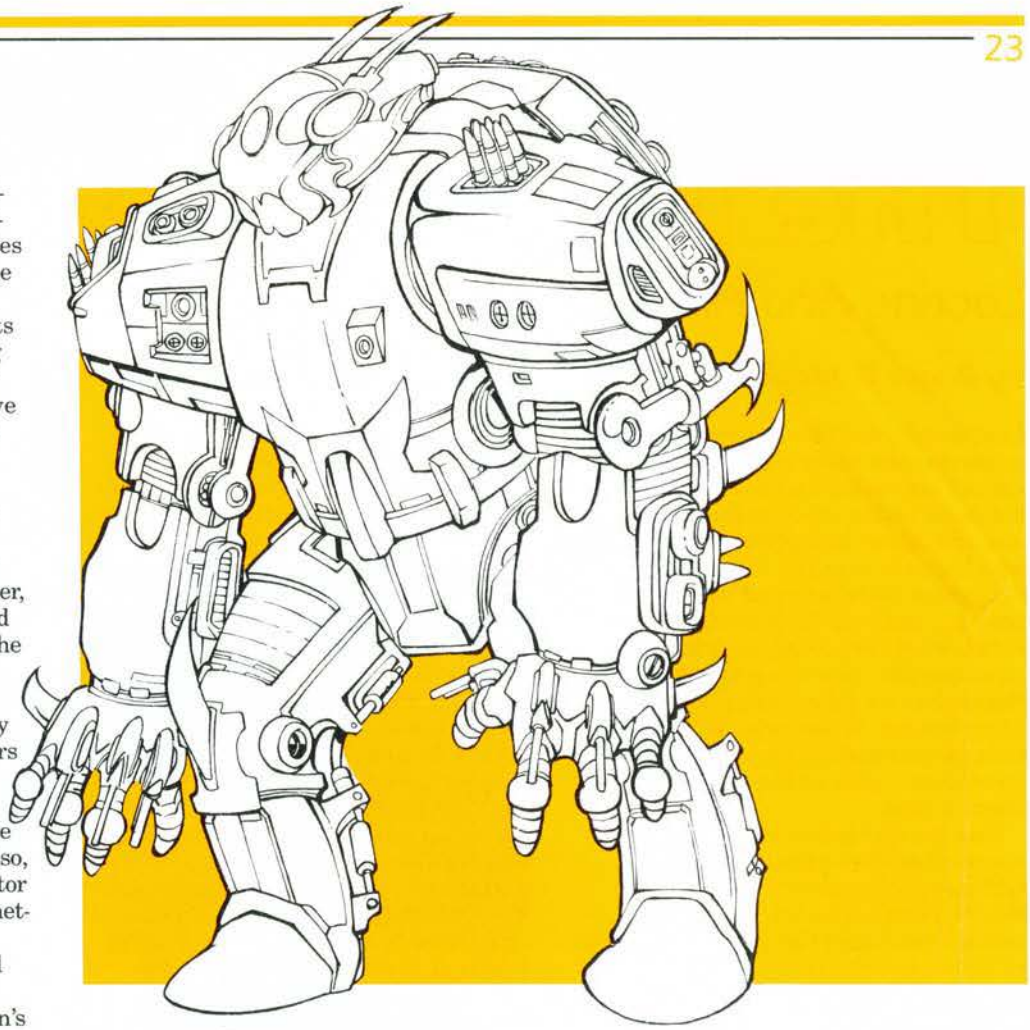
I'm running under the assumption (always a dangerous thing!) that most of you who like gaming and anime also enjoy the mech shows. I just want to toss out a list of mech shows and brief explanations about them. Sprinkled in with these are other shows that, while not mech-based, have other cool "toys" of similar use. Far from complete synopses, these are just overviews for you to scan, to give you an idea of what else is out there for your gaming thievery—er, adaptation.

Mobile Suit Gundam: This one I mentioned in passing in the language section. It's considered to be one of the classics of anime, a "grand old story" in the tradition of space opera. The actual title is *Kido Senshi Mobile Suit Gundam* ("kido senshi" translates to "moving warrior" or "orbit warrior"). A mobile suit is 65 to 70 feet high; it's essentially a walking, flying tank with highly developed armament. The pilot sits in the chest cavity. Mobile suit pilots are Newtypes, humans with highly developed psychic powers. (It seems that being born in space increases one's chances of being a Newtype.) These powers appear in childhood, peak in adolescence, and then wane. Being a Newtype in the Gundam universe is like being a mutant in a comic book; people are likely to hate you on sight, as soon as they find out what you are.

The main conflict in this series is a long-running battle for independence, fought by the bottle colonies against Earth. The two sides are the Jions, commanded by Char Aznable, and the Earth forces, of whom the main representative is Amuro Rey. Both Char and Amuro are powerful Newtypes.

Project Hades Zeorymer: This is one of my favorite mech OAV series. OAV stands for Original Anime Video; these shows go direct to video and are not shown on television or in theaters. Consequently, the quality is often better than that of the TV shows. The Zeorymer of the Heavens is a gigantic mech, approximately 350 to 400 feet high. In fact, ALL the mechs in this show are huge. There are seven of these titans, each named for an element (in the classical Japanese sense): heavens, earth, water, fire, moon, mountain, and wind. The premise is a total takeover of the world's economic system by the Haudragon Corporation, which makes 75 percent of all electronic parts (significant, since 62 percent of the world is run by computer in this timeline). Of course, the takeover must be stopped. The Haudragon Corp. is in possession of six of the mechs—all save the Zeorymer.

I don't want to give too much away, for the sake of you who haven't seen this. The hero, Masato Akitsu, is unwillingly dragged into the corporate warfare between the Haudragon Corp. and Last Guardian, a covert government-run agency set up to halt



the takeover. He is the (at first unwilling) pilot of the Zeorymer of the Heavens, and throughout the four-part series he takes on all of the other mechs—one at a time or in groups, it makes little difference. When the Zeorymer puts its fists together and, in its earthshaking voice, utters the single word "Meiou" (Hades), there's little left standing save for the Zeorymer itself. (This is urban renewal at its finest.)

Bubble Gum Crisis: If you liked Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner,* you'll LOVE this. Our heroines are four young women of disparate backgrounds (cyberpunk rocker, computer whiz, lingerie shop owner, and aerobics instructor) who moonlight as the elite peacekeeping force known as the Knight Sabers. Outfitted in hard suits packed chock full of nifty tech toys, they take on their main enemies, the boomers (rendered "buhma" in the Japanese). Boomers are similar to the replicants from "Bladerunner," in that they too are "more human than human." They're also, more often than not, deadly. Their creator corporation is Genom, the leader in genetic engineering.

What's a hard suit? Well, it's powered body armor made from a cerametal (ceramic/metal) compound. Each woman's suit is different, not only in construction (obviously, their bodies are different) but in armament. There are power whips, laser blasters, powered blades... the list goes on and on. (Plenty of good ideas for you cyberpunk gamers.)

Then there are the motoslaves, the transforming motorcycle/mechs the Knight Sabers rely on for heavy artillery. Again, each one is a little different from the others, but they're all big fun.

This is one of the most successful OAV series ever. As with any series, there are good installments and weak ones. I recommend the first, third, fourth, fifth, and seventh ones very highly. The series is being professionally subtitled by AnimEigo.

Shurato: Legend of the Heavenly Sphere: For those of you who want a little more fantasy with your tech, check out this TV series. It's set in the Hindu afterworld of Tenku Kai. The main background players are Vishnu (portrayed as a beautiful female, an interesting twist!) and Indra. Into their private war come Shurato and Gai, best friends in life and martial artists of high caliber. Why "in life?" Because, folks, everyone in this series is one of two things: a deity or dead. But that doesn't mean lack of action!

Our main characters, in addition to Shurato and Gai, are Vishnu's eight generals (read up on your Indian mythology for this, folks!) and a green-haired girl named Lakshu. These are the good guys. In addition to the conflict between Vishnu and Indra, there's that between Shurato and Gai; you see, Gai has been recruited for the bad guys' side. Much of the characterization deals with Shurato's inability to accept the fact that Gai is no longer his pal, and in fact is out to kill him!

Where are the toys in this, you ask? They're nifty little gadgets called "shaktis." Each shakti is unique. A shakti has three forms: talisman, armor, and vehicle. A shakti also has an animal totem: lion, wolf, phoenix, dragon, tiger, whatever. This animal is present in some form or other in each state of the shakti. In other words, as a talisman it may look like a reclining lion. As armor a lion head may appear on the chest. As a vehicle, it may be a larger version of the talisman form. For game statistics on this kakui ["cool," usually only applied to boys and cars, but I think it fits here!] item, see MC7, the first SPELLJAMMER™ Monstrous Compendium. Look under the "Reigar" entry; there you'll find three versions of a shakti, with stats for both armor and vehicular forms. Have fun!

In addition to the shaktis, the characters in "Shurato" have personal magical attacks. These attacks are also tied to the totem animals. For instance, when Shurato chants his mantra for his attack, a lion develops from the energy he calls and carries out the attack. It is also possible (and is done to devastating effect) to combine these assaults into one, called the "mandala attack." To carry this out, the four persons involved stand in compass-point formation and begin their chants. The energy of each individual is channeled into a "pool" of energy, and that sum total is behind each person's own attack (effectively increasing its power by a factor of four). This chanting and channeling is quite draining, and the mandala attack is used only in extreme circumstances.

If you want to read more articles about anime and how it can relate to gaming, or are interested in seeing game statistics for some of the creations, write to the Newszine staff. There are sources for all kinds of gaming present in anime.

Gambatte Kudasai! (Give it your best! Chin up! Hang in there!) ❑

The Living Galaxy

Looting And Pillaging: Barbarian Planets, Part 2

by Roger E. Moore

Last month, we looked at ways in which game masters could justify the existence of low-tech ("barbaric") cultures in a science fiction role playing game. It should come as no surprise to anyone who has played in any interstellar campaign that little material is available on barbaric cultures—how low-tech people think, what they look like, what their cities are like, how the people conduct themselves on a day-to-day basis, etc. Many science fiction rules include low-tech peoples and aliens, but few offer more than a page or two of notes on them, if that.

Because of this lack of depth, trite stereotypes often appear. At worst, a GM may tend to create variations on the "brawny barbarian" theme, low-tech worlds where Conan would be right at home—but not Julius Caesar, Shaka Zulu, Ramses II, Crazy Horse, William the Conqueror, or Kubla Khan. Skip Williams once commented that science fiction games have coverage of the universe that is very broad but not very deep, and that certainly applies here. (How much could *you* cram into a rule book or supplement about the entire inhabited universe?)

This column's solution: Theft! Oops—I mean, Research! Locate all the material you can on low-tech cultures in other role playing games, in reference books, in newspapers, on television, in movies, everywhere. Then loot the best of it and add it to your campaign, to the delight and terror of all your players.

People with broad experience in fantasy role playing games know about generic gaming supplements that can be added to different fantasy campaigns. Some of these "crossover" supplements can be taken directly into science fiction games as well to create whole peoples, societies, cities, and assortments of tools, weapons, and other items to fill a low-tech world. We'll look at some of those in-depth supplements in this column.

Why Bother With Low-Tech?

Before you even think about creating a particular low-tech world to spring on your heroes, think about what could possibly motivate a group of high-tech adventurers to visit a technologically backward culture. Of course, you can always run a MacGuffin Hunt, having the heroes visit the world to chase down some lost treasure, knowledge, or person. You can have the characters' ship crash on the low-tech world, tossing them into a survival adventure. You can do any number of things, most of which were noted in this column in issues #71-72, concerning adventures staged on a single planet.

Let's step back a moment and ask a more important question: Why would an interstellar civilization even bother maintaining contact with a low-tech culture? Why would this world be important to anyone other than its "primitive" inhabitants? These questions determine how the world fits into the interstellar culture, thus affecting what sort of social environment the adventurers enter (and the adventures they'll have). The natives could be friendly, hostile, arrogant, bored, excited, cautious, fearful, or most of the above. But they'll be like that for a good reason.

Using the "Book of Lists" method cited last month, let's assume that there are 10 possible answers for why an interstellar society or group would bother with a low-tech world. I'll brainstorm as many as I can here:

1. The low-tech culture is a source of cheap labor for off-world industries, which set up factories and workshops on the world for low wages, possibly with poor safety standards and limited medical assistance. This assumes that shipping materials off-world is fairly inexpensive, thanks to futuristic technology. The locals might be happy to have jobs that pay far above what they could get otherwise, even with workplace dangers. One risk for the workers here, however, is the company-store trap: Workers are forced to become indebted to the company by purchasing tools or clothing required for their jobs, then are made to work off their debts, which always grow larger. If the company relocates its plants, local workers may be dumped with no support system and a massively depressed economy. Anti-native prejudice could also run high among the plant's company managers if they are off-worlders, leading to serious cases of mistreatment. Think of the position of Mexico and the Far East in today's business world, or of the coal-mine company stores that once existed in the U.S.A.

2. The low-tech world is rich in natural or artificial resources, such as metal ores, gems, minerals, lumber, fossil fuels, handmade goods and artifacts, foodstuffs, drugs, grazing land, and so forth. At least one off-world nation or industry wishes to exploit those resources, exporting portable goods for sale on the interstellar market. Unfortunately, off-world forces are not likely to take the welfare of the local people into account when the former move in to take control of those resources or goods. Native peoples are likely to be cheated out of their unsuspected wealth or locally produced products, and the off-worlders will probably back up their claims to the goods with superior firepower. Fortune hunters, poachers, and outright thieves might compete on an individual basis to strip the world of its portable riches (gems, furs, small artifacts, etc.) for sale to off-world museums, art collections, and so forth.

Anti-native prejudice among off-world officials will probably be extreme, and natives might wage a hopeless war against the "invaders" (unless all of them have been worked into the off-world business itself). Think of the conflicts today between native peoples and industrial forces that want native lands and everything under them. Conflicts go on even now between oil companies and Native Americans over oil rights in the U.S.A., and over gold between Amazonian Indians and Brazilian gold miners in South America.

In the most extreme circumstances, the locals themselves are a "natural resource," and they will be enslaved (see option #4, following). If the high-tech invader is carnivorous and somewhat sociopathic, the natives might even be raised as cattle and eaten, as happens when the catlike Kzinti attack human worlds in Larry Niven's Known Space series, and in the infamous *Twilight Zone* TV episode, "To Serve Man."

3. The low-tech world is seen as a sort

of resort area, a place where vacationing people from other worlds can visit on prearranged tours. The natives might be allowed and even encouraged to keep up their local customs, but they might have trouble getting access to the good parts of high-tech culture (medical care, clothing, building materials, weapons, etc.). They might also face genteel prejudice from tour promoters and tourists, who will be out to see "quaint savages" in their element. Think of certain Native American reservations in the U.S. or of native Polynesians and Caribbean islanders in oceanic tourist spots.

4. The low-tech world is a haven for criminal activity, thanks to its inability to detect or control the activities of high-tech criminals who move in. A pirate base, a smuggling center, a slavery ring, or a terrorist camp could operate here without the knowledge of the locals, or the criminals could operate openly in complete contempt of the natives (perhaps even enslaving them to work for the criminals themselves). The locals might even cooperate with the criminals for a share of the profits, some joining the criminals in their work off-world. Think of the slave trade in Africa, and how some tribes cooperated with the slavers by helping to capture rival tribesmen.

5. The low-tech world, because of its out-of-the-way location and poor law enforcement, is perfect for industrial manufacturing or testing procedures that cause a lot of pollution—air, land, sea, the works. Locals would rarely have anything to do with the plant's operations, except to gain all of the plant's "negative benefits." Military weapons' testing can be included here, as can atomic-materials processing and the like. The locals are going to be *very* hostile to outsiders. Think of the inhabitants of the grossly polluted Love Canal, NY, or the people downwind from the Chernobyl reactor facility in Ukraine.

6. The low-tech world is of strategic military importance in a sensitive area. An off-world concern may wish to establish huge military bases on or around the world, involuntarily dragging its people into the horrors of interstellar warfare. Fighting between the natives and the "invader" is probably inevitable, even if the high-tech folks think they're doing this for the locals' own good (a "better dead than Red" sort of philosophy). In some instances, however, the natives might cooperate and join with the off-world group against a detested third party. Think of any number of Third World nations in the past two centuries which were caught between various superpowers and colonial empires in the latter's struggle for world supremacy. Also think of the American Special Forces ("Green Beret") teams, which are trained to go into rural areas threatened by a third party and teach the locals to defend themselves, raising up their own guerillas and militia.

7. The low-tech world offers unique scientific insights, and it is being monitored by anthropologists, xenobiologists, and other scientists for the sake of "pure knowledge." The scientists are likely to treat the natives well, if sometimes in a paternal sort of way. The natives may be impressed by the scientists' demeanor and equipment. Think of Margaret Mead and other American and European scientists who visited Polynesian cultures and wrote of their experiences. Stretching the point, think of Jane Goodall and Diane Fossey, and their studies (and defense) of chimpanzees and gorillas, respectively, in Africa.

8. The low-tech culture openly or covertly seeks access to interstellar markets in search of high-tech goods it cannot get otherwise, even going so far as to build and staff its own low-tech starports. The people might want the cash tourists and industries will bring, and so they invite as many rich concerns to their world as possible—though possibly with restrictions to preserve the environment and local customs. In many cases, the locals might be after weapons and military vehicles if they are involved in a war or anticipate the coming of one. Think of various tourist-oriented Caribbean nations that thrive on outside contact, and of Cuba, which bought arms from Communist nations to repel an anticipated invasion from the U.S. (which happened in 1961 and came close to happening again on a larger scale in 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis).

9. The low-tech world, because it is very rich and sparsely inhabited (and defended), is regarded by a high-tech interstellar power as a possible settlement for a new colony. The natives will likely be resettled by incoming colonists, who will of course go right for the best land and natural resources. Natives are probably fated to be shoved into unwanted areas on the planet; in extreme circumstances, they might be exterminated by accident (usually by disease) or on purpose (by warfare and concentration camps). If they survive, the natives will be on the bottom rung of the new social ladder. Warfare between high-tech and low-tech peoples is inevitable, but the low-tech people aren't likely to win without third-party intervention, which could lead to a prolonged and savage guerilla war. Think of the fate of native peoples of the Americas, Asia, and Australia with the advent of European settlement and exploitation. A number of books that came out around Columbus Day, 1992, covered this situation in the Americas in great detail and are worth reading.

10. The low-tech culture is seen as backward in a social or religious sense, and the high-tech culture wants to convert the locals to the high-tech society's way of doing things. This is not likely to occur without some other pressure, however, such as the off-world's desire to exploit the resources of the planet (and have a friendly local population as well). Missionaries will be either welcomed, ignored, or attacked by the natives. Over time, however, a large population of political, religious, and cultural converts could join the interstellar society, though likely at the expense of losing all touch with their cultural roots. Think of the religious missionary work that goes on around the world—e.g., the expansion of Protestant and Catholic religions into African, Asian, and North and South American native cultures.

Perhaps one more form of contact between high-tech and low-tech cultures could be added—that being no contact at all:

11. The low-tech culture is marked as off-limits by a high-tech power, for fear of outside agencies contaminating or destroying the low-tech group. This situation, probably the rarest of them all, is of course the "Prime Directive" circumstance we saw in the *Star Trek* TV shows, old and new. GDW's *Traveller/MegaTraveller* game and FASA's *Star Trek: The RPG* included such interdicted worlds (marked as "red zones" in the GDW games); modern-day Earth is a world interdicted by interstellar society in Tri Tac's *Incursion* system. The only contact in this case between the low-tech and high-tech cultures will be accidental (e.g., a starship crashes) or on a minor, nuisance scale (e.g., a jewel thief lands on the world to steal a tribe's emerald-laden scepter, or a native stows away on an exploration vehicle).

Note that according to the "zoo hypothesis," advanced by astronomers during the 1970s to account for why our world has not yet been contacted by intelligent aliens, our world might be regarded by aliens as so helplessly primitive that contact with us would be a waste of time, much like humans trying to communicate with ants. An exceptionally snobbish high-tech culture might feel this way about a low-tech one, but it seems more likely that exploitation will be the order of the day.

(Un)Civilized Life

Looking for a low-tech society or city that starfaring characters can visit on their next planetfall? Fantasy role playing games have quite a number of them, but many are thickly tied in with fantasy monsters and magic systems that may have no place in your campaign. You could substitute your science fiction game's own psionics or mental-powers rules for the supplement's magic system, but that might involve a *lot* of work—we'll save this topic for another column. Magic use appears in FASA's *Shadowrun* and StarChilde's *Justifiers* games; psionics appears in GDW's *Traveller/MegaTraveller* universe, Steve Jackson's *GURPS* rules, Tri Tac's *Incursion* and *Fringeworthy* systems, R. Talsorian's *Mekton II* game, and TSR's STAR FRONTIERS® rules (the mentalists in *Zebulon's Guide*). (We can't forget the quasi-magical Force in West End's *Star Wars: The RPG.*)

You would do best with a "magic-light" campaign area, something small enough to be easily managed yet large enough for a variety of encounters. It would also help to have supplements with few gaming statistics for personalities, animals, aliens, and variant humans (fantasy races, actually), so they can be dropped into your own campaign without a lot of paperwork beforehand (you can populate the area with non-player characters having standardized statistics, for instance).

Some of the best of these supplements are described here. An asterisk (*) following a listing indicates the product is highly recommended. Perhaps the only sour note is that many of the low-tech supplements given here have a distinct Middle Ages feudal flavor. The GM must find ways to add more local color to these settings to give them a science fiction tilt. Perhaps the armor worn by one people is patterned after old suits of powered armor used by the colony's original settlers. Or maybe bits of high-tech equipment crop up all over the colony, either leftovers from the original settlement or late arrivals from interstellar traders who bargained for local goods. Any primitive colony aware that it is descended from spacefarers is likely to have the appropriate symbols worked into its coats of arms, flags, insignias, and so forth (spacecraft, stars, planetary maps, logos of corporations or empires, etc.). Don't let the players think that your barbaric society is merely Norman England transposed to Rigel IX; make each low-tech world unique.

Societies From Games

If you want to base a low-tech society on previously published fantasy game material (products loosely tied to a rules system but with a nice dose of "realism" and believability), you are in luck. A number of campaign settings and supplements contain generic advice and data for setting up low-tech worlds and cultures. Some work is obviously going to be involved, but with a little perseverance, you'll have dozens of exciting adventures waiting for your players' spacefaring characters.

Among the best such supplements for building low-tech cultures are those for Steve Jackson's *GURPS* game, which are well researched and thick with plot hooks, campaign twists, adventure ideas, and details on settings and personalities. I recommend in particular the *GURPS Ice Age*, GURPS Horseclans*, GURPS Conan* (now out of print), *GURPS Imperial Rome*, GURPS Vikings*, GURPS China*, GURPS Japan*, GURPS Middle Ages*, GURPS Robin Hood, GURPS Scarlet Pimpernel, GURPS Swashbucklers**, and *GURPS Camelot* books (whew!).

The *GURPS Horseclans* set-up, based on the novels by Robert Adams, details a post-holocaust barbarian society in North America. The *GURPS Ice Age* book also allows for futuristic post-nuclear barbarism of the sort seen in the GAMMA WORLD® game from TSR, as well as barbarism with other sorts of science fiction flavor. Get the *GURPS Martial Arts** and *GURPS Psionics** books if you want to add these "no-tech" elements to your campaign; they make touring a barbarian planet much more interesting. Don't forget the *GURPS Space Unnight** setting as an example in low-tech society-building.

TSR's AD&D® game has similar bene-

ficial accessories. From the historical files come the recently released *Vikings*, *Charlemagne's Paladins*, *Celts*, and *Mighty Fortress Campaign Sourcebooks*, the latter of which deals with Renaissance Europe. The *Charlemagne's Paladins* text, combined with an interstellar campaign, brings to mind Poul Anderson's amusing novel, *The High Crusade*. Certain other culture-specific AD&D campaign worlds, such as the AL-QADIM™ *Arabian Adventures* tome and AD&D original edition *Oriental Adventures* books, or the *Horde* and *Maztica* boxed sets, are very magic- and fantasy-heavy, making their contents difficult to translate into purely science fiction terms. The highly regarded D&D® game Known World Gazetteers suffer from a similar fantasy- and magic-laden set-up, though some are thick with maps, floor plans, and cultural notes. Use them as best you can.

For notes on role playing combative or sneaky barbarians in general, look at the AD&D 2nd Edition *Complete Fighter's Handbook** and *Complete Thief's Handbook** (TSR, 1989). Though designed specifically for the AD&D game, each provides information on different personalities and types of warriors and rogues, as well as giving special combat maneuvers, unique skills, and equipment notes. Each is more than 120 pages long and jammed with information to bring barbarians to life.

Of special interest here is Columbia Games's second-edition *HárnWorld** supplement, which outlines an entire low-tech planet with low-level (read: easily altered) magical influences. The world of Kethira is described in general terms, with specific emphasis on the island of Hárn. A gorgeous 20″ × 30″ color map and two thick descriptive booklets (covering local geography, history, cultures, religions, economics, and politics) are included in a paper folder. If I had to set up my first low-tech world for high-tech adventurers, I'd choose this supplement and all those related to it, adding on other recommended works in this article as well.

Cities And Castles From Games

Low-tech peoples can build amazingly sophisticated structures, as anyone who has seen the pyramids of Egypt or Mexico can attest. Lots of fantasy game modules and supplements have extensive maps of both primitive urban areas and building interiors (castles, dungeons, caverns, forts, you name it). For example, try the AD&D *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Atlas* or *Atlas of the DRAGONLANCE® World*. Several game companies also produce stand-up models of castles and other structures; TSR has the boxed sets *Castles*, *Cities of Mystery*, *Dungeons of Mystery*, and *Strongholds*, each jammed with paper construction sheets made for use with 25mm gaming figures. The following are other game products of particular interest:

*Carse** (Chaosium, Inc., 1986). This 56-page booklet details a medieval-style seaport and its population in generic, easily converted game terms. Those few characters capable of using magic can easily be adjusted to have psionic powers, if such appear in your game system. This medieval setting is perfect for a base of operations if a high-tech adventure group (in disguise?) plans to stay in the area for a while. A nice 22″ × 17″ pull-out map of the city is included, as are notes on major NPCs in the area.

*Castle Guide** (TSR, 1990). As guides on castle-building in role playing games go, this is one of the most detailed and best illustrated. Feudal government, castle occupations, steps in building a castle, unusual castles, siege warfare, and three generic castles are presented. The book's system for financing the building of castles has been shown to be flawed, but the rest of the volume is of high quality. Ignore the AD&D game statistics, which are few, or convert them to your own game system, which should not be difficult.

*Castles of Hárn** (Columbia Games, 1987). Much of the campaign material for the *Hárnworld* system is of outstanding quality, particularly in visual terms. This booklet is no exception. Eight small castle-dominated communities on the island of Hárn are presented with full-page, full-color local maps, floor plans for the castles, personality details, and more. Any one of these would be a perfect setting for an adventure with high-tech characters. Perhaps a castle baron's men recovered a downed space scout and are holding him in the dungeon as a spy; maybe a nuclear weapon, radio, fuel container, or other high-tech item must be recovered by undercover adventurers before the castle folk figure out how to work or break the device.

*Cities of Hárn** (Columbia Games, 1983), and its companion supplement *Son of Cities** (Columbia Games, 1987). More light is shed upon Hárn in these two booklets, which detail its largest seven cities. All information is in generic form, so any game system (even science fiction ones) can be used. These booklets have lots of beautiful maps and nicely executed floor plans, with notes on each city's history and major inhabitants. Any one of these places would be an excellent jump-off point for an adventure. (Note: *Cities of Hárn* is out of print.)

*CityBook I**, *II**, *III**, *IV**, and *V* (Flying Buffalo Inc., various dates). These books offer an enormous amount of material perfect for fleshing out urban establishments in almost any fantasy game system (they work great for science fiction games, too). Each book also comes with numerous lifelike NPCs, any one of which could spark an adventure if encountered by grounded science fiction heroes. They could even become player characters if one player wants to be a "barbarian." The generic character descriptions can be easily translated into any game system. Book I covers standard businesses; II, the waterfront; III, the dark side of town; and IV, travel between the city and elsewhere. Book V, which covers nonhuman establishments and personalities, is of less use unless your game system handles "standard" fantasy races like elves and dwarves. The first four books are strongly recommended for the wealth of scenario ideas and urban details they offer.

*The Compendium of Weapons, Armour & Castles** (Palladium Books, 1991). This extraordinary 224-page volume gives generic game information on more than 700 real-world weapons, 40 types of armor, and 40 castles (mostly European, with floor plans). Profusely and superbly illustrated, this ranks as one of the most valuable texts you can have in selecting any low-tech culture's war-making tools and devices. The writing is clear, and the examples are drawn from many low-tech historical cultures the world over.

FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures (TSR, 1990). Need a quick map of a small barbaric city? Take one right out of chapter four, "Cities of the Heartlands," which has two dozen of them all mapped out and detailed. If you also happen to need some barbaric treasures that don't include magical swords, look at chapter six, "Treasures," which covers gems, jewelry, precious stones, coinage, and a table of 100 random art objects. Because it has so much AD&D

game material, I can't advocate you buying this right away, but if you happen to already have it or can borrow it—go for it!

*The Palladium Book of Weapons and Assassins** (Palladium Books, 1983). A 50-page booklet full of nasty surprises about three historical organizations of killers: the Moslem Order of Assassins, the Indian Thugees, and the Japanese ninja. General details on methods and equipment for each group is provided, with useful material on how each organization grew and eventually faded (a dictionary of assassins' terms is offered, too). High-tech types will never sneer at clever low-tech folks again after meeting a few of these foes.

*The Palladium Book of Weapons and Castles of the Orient** (Palladium Books, 1984). A nice overview of ancient Japanese and Chinese military hardware and fortifications, this 50-page booklet can be helpful in setting up low-tech worlds with an Oriental flavor. Parts of this book appear in the massive *Compendium.*

The Palladium RPG Book II: Old Ones (Palladium Books, 1990). This supplement offers plans for 21 forts and 34 towns, all with brief notes on local laws, encounters, businesses, personalities, history, etc. The maps aren't up to the standard of some of the other products here, and many game statistics are present for the *Palladium RPG,* but you may find some of this material of use in creating a quick-and-dirty barbaric village.

*RuneQuest Cities** (The Avalon Hill Game Company, 1988). Do you have a low-tech city but no encounters? Get this 64-page booklet, and you'll have more urban encounters than you will believe. Though supposedly for the *RuneQuest* game, this work is done in generic game format that allows GMs to roll up meetings with every low-tech person you could imagine, from beggars and street urchins to adventurers and holy men. The nonhuman- and god-encounter sections are quite short and may be altered as the GM sees fit. Further instructions are given for creating and populating your own villages, and for creating surprising events for making low-tech characters' lives quite hectic. (Note: This work was derived from an earlier one called *Cities,* from Midkemia Press, which was similar.)

*Thieves World** boxed set (Chaosium, Inc., 1981). This award-winning multigenre adventure setting is perhaps the best-designed low-tech game city. Numerous authors worked to bring life to the city of Sanctuary, home of Robert L. Asprin's many Thieves' World anthologies, offering essays on its government, politics, religions, history, personalities, and neighborhoods, with encounter tables, street maps, and floor plans. Even local oaths are listed in a sidebar. The section in the "Personalities of Sanctuary" booklet covering the placement of this setting in GDW's *Traveller* game is of special interest to science fiction gamers.

*Tulan of the Isles** (Chaosium, Inc., 1987). This 64-page booklet describes a river port built across several islands, and it even includes a 22″ × 17″ pull-out map of the town. A small nearby farming community is also detailed. Many adventure hooks for low-tech groups (or slumming high-tech groups) are provided. This gem fits almost any low-tech world with a medieval flavor.

Access To Tools

If you've crash-landed in a preindustrial culture, you're going to have to repair your spacecraft with preindustrial tools (not to mention defend yourself against preindustrial weapons). That last part may make plasma-gun-toting spacefarers laugh, but properly wielded clubs and knives kill just as well as more advanced weapons. Low-tech peoples are capable of producing balloons, poisons, canals, gliders, pyramids, libraries, walled cities, paved roads, monuments, ships, and other things that assert their innate intelligence and creativity. In the gaming field, the following items are of use to GMs with low-tech science fiction worlds:

*Arms and Equipment Guide** (TSR, 1991). This is a nicely done overview of weapons and armor from standard AD&D campaigns with a medieval flavor. Also included are details on medieval clothing and nonmagical adventurers' equipment, with notes on the history and use of each item in the book. Game statistics are minimal and easily converted to other systems.

*Aurora's Whole Realms Catalogue** (TSR, 1992). What else is there besides weapons and armor? This densely packed 160-page AD&D game booklet offers an amazing range of medieval goods (farm tools, furniture, clothing, alchemical gear, thieves' tools, musical instruments, toys, and even armored undergarments) in a format similar to a Sears Catalog. With this item, you can outfit almost any advanced low-tech setting, from a king's castle to a peasant's hut. The quirky humor is right on target. Here, too, game statistics are minimal—they practically don't exist! Most interesting of all is "DaRoni's Workshop," an amusing look at how low-tech cultures might (with luck!) produce "high-tech" things like coal-powered automobiles; man-powered helicopters, tanks, and aircraft; parachutes; diving suits; and submarines.

*The Compendium of Weapons, Armour & Castles** (Palladium Books, 1991); *Weapons and Castles of the Orient** (Palladium Books, 1984); *Weapons & Assassins** (Palladium Books, 1983). These three books were mentioned earlier for their coverage of castles and other structures. They are best known, however, for their extensive notes on fighting equipment, and they are superbly illustrated. By all means, get these.

The Complete Bard's Handbook (TSR, 1992). The only section of interest in this AD&D supplement is chapter seven, covering the development of real-world music through the Renaissance period. A great many ancient musical instruments are carefully illustrated and described, and a glossary of musical terms and songs is given.

Historical Sources

A few easy-to-use historical references stand out among the many thousands that a GM could potentially use for giving depth to a science fiction low-tech campaign world. Start with the See Inside series, edited by R. J. Unstead and published by Grisewood & Dempsey. Cutaway views and full-color pictures are given of reconstructed settlements from ancient times (e.g A Castle, An Ancient Greek Town, An Egyptian Town, and A Roman Town). Though each is only 30 pages long and intended for younger readers, these are excellent overviews of several major time periods that you might wish to duplicate in your game.

You can also see the internationally acclaimed series by David Macaulay showing the building of great architectural structures in history, rendered with superb black-and-white illustrations. Look for *Cathedral: The Story of Its Construction, Castle, Pyramid,* and *City* (showing an imaginary Roman town). Combine these references with the See Inside series and some of the

GURPS game supplements, and you could have a powerful setting with a quasi-historical flavor.

As a general reference on ancient architecture, from the Library at Alexandria to medieval siege machines, you should pick up a paperback copy of L. Sprague de Camp's magnificent *The Ancient Engineers.* The printing press, clockwork mechanisms, aqueducts, windmills, warships, and the Seven Wonders of the ancient world are given careful treatment, as are other inventions and works. This material is excellent for figuring out just what "barbarians" of a certain tech level can build (you'll be very surprised).

Of course, there are hundreds of other books available at any local library and bookstore on historical societies on which you can base a primitive-tech world. For a specific instance of Stone Age construction and scientific knowledge, for example, you might consult *Stonehenge Decoded,* by Gerald S. Hawkins and John B. White (did you know that Stonehenge could be used to track eclipses?). For the role playing viewpoint of a low-tech emperor, read Marguerite Yourcenar's thoughtful historical novel, *Memoirs of Hadrian.* For a close look at the darker side of a decadent empire's city life, read *The Satyricon,* by Petronius. You might even search for *Jamestown 1544-1699,* by Carl Bridenbaugh, a vivid account of an early American settlement by a noted modern historian. Jamestown could be considered an "advanced" barbaric city, though London of that time would be much more so. Speaking of London, Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* provides a chilling account of the spread of the Black Death through a low-tech nation; perhaps a similar event will happen in your campaign, catching the PCs in disaster's jaws.

Never forget other real-world low-tech societies, the details of which may be found in encyclopedias, magazines, history books, movies, television shows, and a dozen other sources. Consider the examples of Eskimos, New Guinea headhunters, native Amazonians, Huns, Pygmies, Australian aborigines, Incas, and Middle-Eastern peoples in Biblical times. Those groups that survived to the modern day have been profoundly affected by the coming of high technology, an event certain to happen over and over in science fiction games. Read Gary Paulsen's intensely exciting novel, *Dogsong* (on a modern Eskimo boy's coming of age), or check out the May 1985 issue of *Science 85,* for "Bushmen," an article on the rapid erosion of the society and values of the Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari desert, after their exposure to modern culture.

Science Fiction And Fantasy

No discussion of low-tech barbarians in space would be complete without looking at the sources you could use from science fiction and fantasy tales. Many are interesting if you want to run barbaric PCs who encounter high-tech visitors! A *very* brief list of recommended works includes:

Anderson, Poul. *The High Crusade.* What would happen if aliens had invaded Earth during the time of the Crusades? This wild novel recounts the story of some medieval English folk who captured an alien starship and went on to storm the universe. Maybe it could happen in your game! (Note that Tri Tac's *Incursion* role playing game has a similar story line, though it takes place in today's world.)

Anthony, Piers. *Battle Circle.* This is a collection of three earlier novels on post-atomic barbarism. I haven't read this, but I have heard that it is very good.

Benét, Stephen Vincent. "The Place of the Gods." This powerful short story, also known as "By the Waters of Babylon," tells of a barbarian boy's search for knowledge, and what he found out about his world.

Biggle, Jr., Lloyd. *Monument.* This is a great novel about the way in which one low-tech world avoided being destroyed by contact with interstellar society. Could PCs do the same somewhere else?

Burroughs, Edgar Rice. I won't even bother listing all the Barsoom, Venus, Tarzan, Pellucidar, and other novels he wrote. The Pellucidar ones are in many ways the most entertaining, though they are all good. You will be hard pressed to find a better mix of high adventure set on primitive worlds. Do your high-tech heroes want to carve out their own empires on alien worlds?

de Camp, L. Sprague. This prolific author, mentioned earlier, has also produced a number of stories and novels about barbaric alien worlds contacted by humans in the future. The stories about Krishna and Vishnu are especially great. See in particular his short stories "Finished" and "The Galton Whistle," and the novels *The Hand of Zei* and *The Search for Zei.* These tell of lively and amusing adventures had by Earthlings on primitive but dangerous worlds, often meeting all-too-clever alien rulers who refuse to let high-tech Earthlings outwit them.

Lanier, Sterling. *Hiero's Journey.* If you like the GAMMA WORLD® game's brand of post-atomic barbarism, this book is for you! It's an exciting tale of a warrior's adventures among mutant animals and bizarre technology.

LeGuin, Ursula K. *Rocannon's World.* A high-tech explorer is trapped on a primitive, multiracial world during an interstellar war, and he must save himself and the world's cultures from being destroyed by the enemy. This is a great read.

Miller, Walter M. *A Canticle for Leibowitz.* A powerful and award-winning novel of post-atomic barbarism, set against the revival of the Catholic Church.

Saberhagen, Fred. *Berserker's Planet.* A barbaric world is found to be ruled by a computer—one extremely hostile to all life. What are its plans? This novel generates several good adventuring ideas.

Finally, I strongly recommend that you look for *The Blade of Conan,* a 1979 paperback anthology of essays on the writings of Robert Howard and other sword-and-sorcery authors, edited by (of course) L. Sprague de Camp. Several of the essays are extremely useful to anyone running a low-tech world; see "Hyborian Technology," "The Real Hyborian Age," "The Complete Swordplay-and-Sorcery Hero," and the collection of chapters on recommended weapons and armor for barbarians in general. A second anthology, *The Spell of Conan,* is much less useful, though it has a good essay on our modern views on barbarism, entitled "The Heroic Barbarian."

There's lots more to be said on this topic, but it will hold for another time. Next month—no barbarians. Instead, in the spirit of April surprises, we'll look at ways in which a GM may enliven a science fiction game campaign with a potpourri of creative techniques. See you then.

❑

The Living City

Renegade's Run

by Mike Selinker

Renegade's Run is designed for characters of second through fourth level, or it can be run as a solo adventure.

The Renegade's Escape

Sergeant Romilys Ganelon, a trusted aide of Ravens Bluff Chief Constable Rolf "Sunny" Sunriver, absconded with Lord Marshal Gaius Varro's prized bronze *horn of Valhalla.*

Apprehending Ganelon would not be difficult because of the number of city guards. However, Ravens Bluff is once again beset by "The Veil," a heavy fog that severely limits sight.

On nights of The Veil, the City Guards position themselves to cover as many areas as possible; these stations were established by Ganelon. Sunriver suspects there is a path through this maze of guards, which—so far—is only known to Ganelon.

The player characters' mission is to find that path and stop the renegade before he escapes the city.

Players' Introduction

You watch the wispy tendrils of the Veil through the windows of the Night Watch barracks. The Night Watch, of which you are members, assists the City Guard in patrolling the streets during The Veil.

Chief Constable Rolf "Sunny" Sunriver appears noiselessly behind you. It is time to go to work.

"You look reasonably bright," he says brusquely. "Come with me."

"We have a renegade City Guard Sergeant on our hands. He stole the bronze *horn of Valhalla* that belongs to Lord Marshall Gaius Varro, your boss and mine. The thief, Sergeant Romilys Ganelon, is someone I hired years ago. A former burglar, I believed he had left his larcenous ways behind. He had me fooled, as he worked hard and gained the respect of the guards.

"Under normal conditions it would not be difficult to apprehend a thief in the city. The guards are well-trained. However, The Veil has moved in. Ganelon created the guard posting for times of The Veil. I believe a thief could find a path past those guards—especially a thief who established the guards' positions.

"We're now at the south end of this map. We spotted Ganelon entering the sewers at the entrance I marked with an "S." The map shows the locations of my 20 watchmen—indicated with the letter "W." They only can see 30 feet, or three squares, in any direction during The Veil. Ganelon's path will keep him out of their sight.

"If he gets past the south end of the map, we'll never catch him. He has a *ring of free action* that I'm sure will let him move around the sewers as if he were on the streets. But he can't go the entire route underground, as the sewers are limited. Look at your map, and you'll see what I mean.

"The sewer entrances are marked on the map with a circle in the middle of a street. However, not all entrances lead to the sewers, as sewer construction is not yet complete. The sewer sections that run beneath these streets are each 40 feet long, or four squares, and they never run diagonally. Therefore, the existing sewers only run between openings that are within four squares of each other.

"The thief also has a *skeleton key,* a magical item that belongs to this office. It will let him go through locked doors as if they weren't there. That means he can enter and leave any building on the street in any direction—as long as he doesn't do so by a door within 30' of a watchman. He can also go through the market in any direction. The market is open on all sides.

"I'm certain Ganelon knows the one way through the city that isn't covered by the guard posting. I can't move the guards, because these positions really are the best to watch out for the safety of the Ravens Bluff citizens. So, I need your help. You must figure out his course. Ganelon went into the sewers 10 minutes ago. That mean's you've likely got 20 minutes to find the path he would take and be ready for him where he will exit at the southern end of the map.

"The Lord Marshall has loaned me his *ring of spell storing,* and I'm entrusting it to you. It might help. It has one spell, *invisibility 10' radius.* When you find Ganelon's exit point, cast the spell on yourselves so you can set up an ambush, and then try to capture him.

City guards: Int Average; AL NG and LN; AC 4; MV 9; HD 4; hp 30 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg By weapon; SZ M

Weapon Proficiencies: long sword, light crossbow, dagger, halberd. Each guard wears chain mail and carries a shield.

Sergeant Romilys Ganelon: Int Very; AL N; AC 5; MV 12; HD 4 (4/4 fighter/thief); hp 27 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (short sword), other by weapon; SZ M

Magic Items: *ring of free action, short sword +1, skeleton key, boots of striding and springing, horn of valhalla*

Weapon Proficiencies: short sword, sling, club, dagger, spear

Special Abilities: 90% MR vs. charm and sleep, 60' infravision, +1 to hit with sword or bow, detect secret doors, PP 55, OL 35, FT 35, MS 50, HS 50, DN 40, CW 70, RL 10, damage x2 on backstab.

Romilys is 5'1" tall, weighs 103 pounds, and is 125 years old. He hates combat, preferring to flee than fight. If attacked, he will blow the *horn,* summoning (2 + 1 per every four PC levels) warriors.

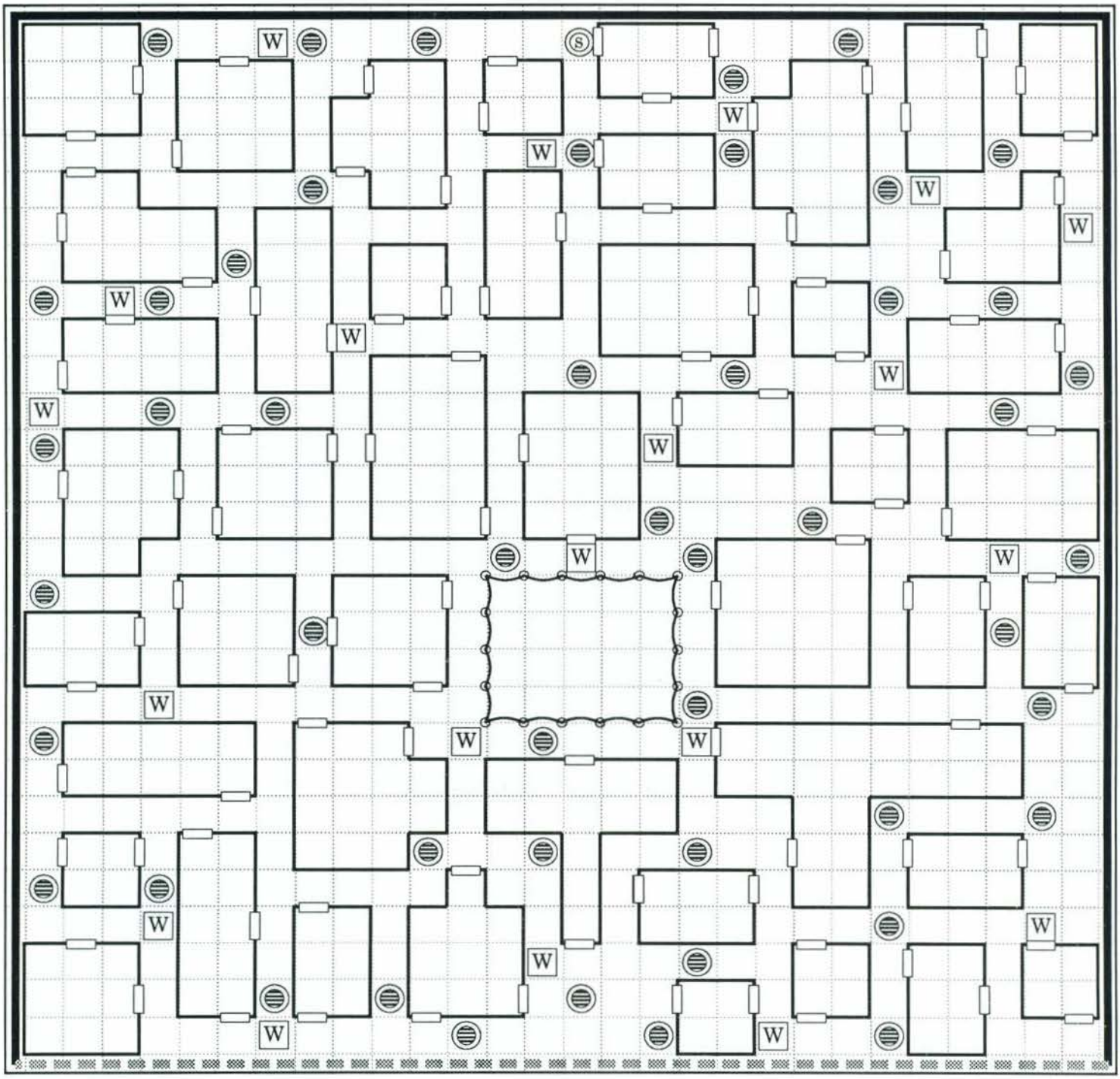
Fighters summoned by the horn: Int Low; AL CN; AC 4; MV 9; HD 4; hp 24 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg By weapon; SZ M; ML never check morale.

Weapon proficiencies: battle axe, spear

Experience Reward

For capturing Romilys, 975 points; solving the puzzle, 100 points each; returning the horn, 200 points; defeating each berserker, 175 points; being promoted to the city guards, 500 points each.

Renegade's Run Map



W Watchman S Starting Point Sewer Covers

Notes To Solution—Inside Back Mailing Cover

The renegade's run is shown on the map. Solid lines indicate above ground movement, while dotted lines indicate Ganelon's path in the sewers. The renegade's path covers exactly 180 squares, which will take him 30 minutes at a steady movement of 60' per minute. Since the PCs begin solving the puzzle 10 minutes after he enters the sewers, he will exit the south end of the map 20 minutes later.

BLOODMOOSE™
AND COMPANY
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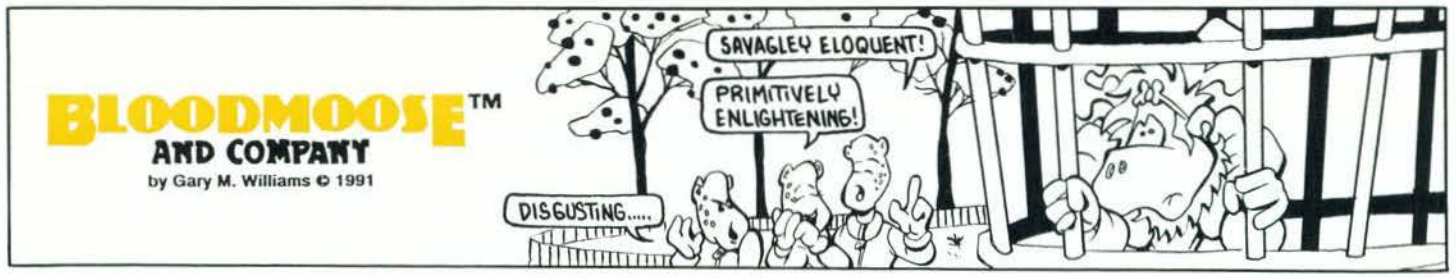

IT'S MORE THAN GOOD, MR. PRESIDENT! IT'S ONE OF OUR OLDEST ACCOUNTS AND WORTH MUCH MORE THAN THE CHECK YOU'RE HOLDING!
HOW MUCH MORE?!?
OH.. BILLIONS!
LOANS
3 6% AND UP
I'M THE BOSS

IN FACT, IF THE ACCOUNT WERE EVER TO BE CLOSED OUT, GALACTIC BANKS INC. WOULD COLLAPSE! AND AS WE ARE THE PRIME LENDING INSTITUTION IN THE GALAXY, YOU CAN GUESS WHAT THAT WOULD MEAN, SIR!!
THAT ZELGRIB I LENT YOU...? WHOOT!!!

TO THE VERY BEGINING OF THE GALACTIC FEDERATION! I THEN OPENED AN ACCOUNT AT THE GALACTIC BANK WITH A SINGLE ZELGRIB, THE ONE THE PRESIDENT GAVE ME IN FACT! HAD HE KNOWN...

I JUST TOOK THE CHANCE THAT THE ACCOUNT WOULD ACCUMLATE ENOUGH INTEREST TO PAY OFF THE FINE. I DIDN'T EXPECT THE ACCOUNT TO BE BIGGER THAN THE WHOLE OF THE GALACTIC DEBT!

ONCE I HAD RETURNED, IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER TO GO TO THE BANK AND GET A CASHIER'S CHECK....
LUCKY FER YOU THET IT WORKED! I'D UH NEVER GOTTEN OUTTA THET ZOO!

BLOODMOOSE, HAVE YOU A SPARE ZELGRIB FOR THE METER? I'M A LITTLE LIGHT....
HEY MAC! Y'KNOW THIS METER'S EXPIRED? I'M GONNA HAVE T' WRITE YA A TICKET!
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